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General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Friday, 28 September 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. José Maria Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde.

Mr. José Maria Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. José Maria Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Neves (Cape Verde) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation provided by the delegation*): While we commend the United Nations for having chosen climate change as the theme for this sixty-second session of the General Assembly, at the same time we recall that many countries in the South have, in recent decades, warned the international community about this phenomenon, which is being experienced here and there through the drama of droughts and desertification. Climate change has multiple causes, some natural and others generated by human action. Therefore, the responsibilities of States and societies with respect to these changes are not equal. Nor are the impacts they have on the lives of the common citizen. Likewise, we do not have the same scientific, technological or financial means to prevent the negative effects of climate change.

At this point, I would like to say a few words about drought and desertification, which demonstrate, without a doubt, the change of climate in the West African subregion. It is needless to mention their devastating impact on the economic and social life of the populations. Unfortunately, in spite of conferences and grandiloquent conclusions and declarations, the repeated calls from the Sahel have received half-heated and inconsistent responses. In view of the profound implications of this stance for the lives of populations and States, some are depicting those responses as an abdication of responsibility on the part of the international community.

Climate change is, without any doubt, a world challenge with many dimensions and the potential to restructure economic, social and political life. Most likely, we have wasted too much time in discussion, thereby delaying global acceptance of the problem and, consequently, the formulation of strategies for adaptation and mitigation.

In brief, I would like to underline the catastrophic effects, both present and future, of climate change and more specifically, of drought and desertification on small island States. If the projections on sea level rise prove to be true, we will be facing a disaster of unimaginable proportions.

My country, Cape Verde, an archipelago of modest physical and demographic dimensions, is a

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small island State and has experienced drought and desertification and suffered from almost uninterrupted water shortages for more than three decades.

Indeed, Cape Verde, given its location, size, landscape and the insular and archipelagic characteristics of its territory, is a prime example of the convergence and concentration of the negative effects of climate change. Drought and desertification have an unquestionable impact on family income and the poverty rate. They also undermine Government efforts and strongly condition the mobilization and allocation of resources for development financing.

In the light of the challenges of climate change, one should recall the leading role that the United Nations has had and continues to have in mustering efforts to raise awareness about this critical problem for the future of mankind. We are convinced that the Bali conference will set new parameters based on the principle of equity, the legitimate aspirations of populations to development and the differentiated responsibilities of each and everyone.

We therefore call on the United Nations to pursue its efforts in this area and give very special attention to small island States, which have to contend with multiple fragilities and vulnerabilities. It is imperative to resume and implement the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The community of nations cannot but acknowledge that, given their origins and their role throughout history, small island States are a "heritage of mankind".

In spite of its structural vulnerabilities and its undeniable lack of natural resources, Cape Verde has, since independence in 1975, followed a positive and consistent development path. It is in this context that we should consider Cape Verde's graduation or, in other words, its withdrawal from the group of least developed countries as of 2008. We are resolved to rise to the challenge of this new development stage and through audacious strategies and decisions to transform the country. We are quite aware that the main responsibility for Cape Verde's development rests in the hands of the Cape Verdean Government and citizens. This is the spirit that has guided us in the past, and it is the spirit that will allow us to face the challenge of graduation. Nevertheless, during the transition period we hope to be able to count on strong partnership from the international community in dealing with Cape Verde's structural fragility and any new vulnerabilities.

In this regard, I call on the United Nations and Member States to pay special attention to the declaration of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group and to the report that the Government will soon deliver to the Secretary-General in accordance with the resolution on graduation which the General Assembly adopted in December 2004.

While it is true that our development strategy is open, daring and driven by the desire to create opportunities for foreign direct investment, it is no less true that today, more than ever, we need innovative aid and financing modalities that are better adjusted to the pace we want to set for Cape Verde's development and to the imperatives of the transition. It is high time that we move from discourse to action with respect to ownership, in accordance with the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Allow me also briefly to recall the transborder and global nature of many modern day phenomena. I refer to climate change and, of course, to terrorism, organized crime and trafficking of all kinds. These represent a threat to human security and to the democratic rule of law, as they corrupt values, compromise development and thwart the most legitimate expectations of peoples.

We are living at a time when problems and threats are of concern to all. They are not confined to a single State or region. Nor can there be local solutions to the global threats of our era. Responses to these issues will be ineffective unless they are undertaken within a robust, balanced and fair multilateral perspective.

The United Nations is, and should continue to be, the foundation, the guarantor and the forum of multilateralism. We are strongly convinced that the United Nations must be strengthened for the sake of the future of the world and of the ideals of peace, security and development. And we are all faced with the challenge of translating the reiterated statements of the international community into coherent and consistent action. It is a question of credibility in the eyes of the world, which is watching us.

I cannot conclude without extending my greetings, congratulations and encouragement to the Secretary-General and wishing him success in guiding

our common Organization towards fully attaining its founding goals and meeting the imperatives of increased efficiency, modernization and democratization in its work.

Likewise, I would like to extend warm greetings to you, Mr. President, and to assure you of our confidence that you will face the important challenges confronting the Assembly with serenity and a sense of duty.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Maria Neves, Prime Minister of the Republic of Cape Verde, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Erdoğan (Turkey) (*spoke in Turkish; interpretation provided by the delegation*): It gives me great pleasure once again to address this body where we unite our goals and labours for a better and brighter future. I wish to wholeheartedly congratulate you, Sir — our good friend the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr. Srgjan Kerim — on your election to preside over this global forum.

I would also like on this occasion to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and to wish him success in his current position.

Our world today needs, more than ever before, effective cooperation to find common solutions to our global problems, to replace desperation with hope, poverty with prosperity, injustice with justice and violence with peace around the world. The United Nations, created precisely for that mission, is the only international forum that can possibly, with our collective resolve, lead us to those objectives. The United Nations is also the source of international legitimacy for our actions to those ends. But, it is incumbent on us, the Member States, to make the Organization stronger and more effective and to furnish it with the means and structures it needs to tackle competently the many challenges of our century.

Here, I believe we need to be more resolute and bold in our actions while adopting more forthcoming and creative approaches. Although significant structural reforms have been realized, the process is far from completed. The reform process must continue, and structural and functional adjustments should be made to respond to needs that may arise.

We must bear in mind that reforming the Security Council in a way that would command the widest possible consensus would also reflect positively on the legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations itself.

I wish on this occasion also to confirm Turkey's candidature for a seat on the Security Council at the elections to be held next year. My country, which is committed to the ideals enshrined in the Charter and which constructively contributes to the maintenance of global peace at a strategic crossroads where different continents and cultures meet, has not been represented on the Council for almost half a century. I genuinely believe that with the valuable support of its fellow Member States, Turkey, with its European and Asian identity, can assume a distinctive and constructive role in harmonizing and reconciling differing views within the Security Council, just as it does in its efforts to facilitate harmony among cultures.

We have reached an important stage in the implementation phase of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative under the auspices of the Secretary-General; we are co-sponsoring this initiative together with Spain. We are determined to make our vision of global harmony become a reality through the implementation of concrete projects under the strong leadership of the High Representative, the former President of Portugal, Mr. Jorge Sampaio, and with the support that I am confident the international community will not deny this initiative. The meeting held at the United Nations with the Alliance Group of Friends earlier this week served to renew our hope and confidence in the promising future of the initiative.

The vast majority of international problems of high priority on the agenda of the United Nations are taking place in our immediate surroundings, the scene of major tension and transformation. We are exerting every effort to constructively contribute to the resolution of all these disputes — which directly impact Turkey, although we are not party to any of them. In doing so, we seek to utilize the many possibilities offered by our strategic position, our accumulated knowledge of and insight into the region, our cultural and historical ties and our vast experience in peacekeeping.

Our highest priority is to restore stability in our region. In that connection, Turkey will resolutely pursue its efforts to serve as an important factor for peace and stability and to promote multidimensional relations with all its neighbours. The encouraging level we have achieved in our relations with Greece today as a result of the process of rapprochement that we have been pursuing for nearly 10 years is the tangible outcome of that resolve.

Likewise, ensuring a dignified place within the international community for a territorially intact, nationally unified and democratic Iraq at peace with itself and with its neighbours is at the top of our priorities for restoring stability in our region.

In line with our desire to realize this common vision, we continue to diversify our cooperation with the Iraqi Government and support the process of political dialogue and national reconciliation in this country. The group of neighbouring countries of Iraq, created upon Turkey's initiative and later expanded at the meeting held in Sharm el-Sheikh to include the permanent five members of the Security Council and the Group of Eight, is similarly intended to serve such a purpose. The next ministerial meeting of the expanded group of neighbouring countries will be hosted by Turkey at the beginning of November this year.

Another major source of instability in our region is the Middle East problem. We regard the question of Palestine, with wide repercussions both in and beyond the region, as the crux of all ills in the Middle East. The political rift within Palestine has further complicated the situation. Therefore, a lasting political solution to the question of Palestine and peace with Israel on the basis of a two-State solution will have important implications for regional as well as global stability. We believe that a negotiated settlement to this long-standing dispute will also reflect positively on the resolution of other problems in the region. We stand ready to support in every way possible the parties in the efforts to revive the peace process and to contribute to the prospective international meetings to be convened for this purpose.

We hope to see the ongoing political crisis in Lebanon promptly overcome through dialogue among the different factions. We will continue our intense efforts, including our contributions to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, to assist in restoring stability in that country.

We will also continue to invest in the democratic, free and prosperous future of the friendly people of Afghanistan. Our commitment to the security of the country by assuming the command of the International Security Assistance Force twice since its inception and currently of the Regional Command in Kabul, together with our contributions to the reconstruction effort through significant infrastructure projects, are the concrete expression of the challenging mission we have undertaken in Afghanistan. The activities of the Turkish Provincial Reconstruction Team in the province of Wardak, carrying out its functions under dangerous security conditions, are also part of this effort.

Moreover, the process of tripartite summits that we have initiated, with the participation of Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the desire to enhance peace and stability in the region is helping to restore confidence between these two neighbouring countries.

On the other hand, frozen conflicts pending a resolution continue to jeopardize regional peace and stability in the South Caucasus. Solutions to be found through peaceful means to existing frozen conflicts should be based on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan and Georgia.

In order to realize our vision of peace, stability and economic prosperity for the region, we not only seek to contribute to the resolution of these frozen conflicts, but at the same time continue to invest in the infrastructure of regional cooperation through significant energy and transportation projects, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum oil and natural gas pipelines and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railroad.

At this juncture where uncertainty regarding the final status of Kosovo persists, we continue to maintain our view that we must mobilize all efforts to find a just and sustainable solution to this question. Turkey has currently assumed the command of the Kosovo Force Multinational Task Force South in the region.

Turkey performs noble duties from the perspective of peacekeeping in almost all the regions cited above. Through its participation in various peacekeeping operations conducted under the banner of the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Turkey has proven its capacity to significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. In this connection Turkey is also favourably considering participation in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, established in accordance with Security Council resolution 1769 (2007), whose adoption we highly welcomed.

To the extent that we can stop and prevent the recurrence of conflicts that exhaust our energy and resources, we will be better able to focus on global problems that will define the common fate of humankind. At the top of these problems is the issue of climate change, which you, Mr. President, have in a very timely manner designated as the main theme of the General Assembly this year.

We discussed this issue requiring urgent collective action in all its aspects during the high-level meeting that I also had the opportunity to attend earlier this week. The most conclusive outcome of this meeting was that we must all assume our fair share of responsibility in effective international cooperation to find solutions to global warming and climate change, which pose, as never before, a grave threat to humankind's survival.

Another grim reality in this context is that the developing world, bearing the least responsibility for climate change, will be the most adversely affected by its consequences. It is therefore incumbent on us all to assist, to the best of our ability, the developing countries in overcoming the many overwhelming challenges that they confront.

To this end, Turkey is rapidly becoming a donor country with the significant development, technical and humanitarian assistance it has been providing in recent years. The development aid provided by Turkey through official and private sources reached 1.7 billion dollars last year. We intend to continue our contributions to the relevant United Nations funds, as well as assistance at the bilateral level.

The Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries hosted by Turkey in Istanbul in July this summer is another concrete expression of our resolve to assist the developing countries and enable them to take full advantage of the benefits of globalization. We are already taking steps to follow up on the outcome of this conference.

Our commitment to peace and development in Africa also finds expression in our development assistance to the continent coordinated through the branch offices of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency, which have been established since 2005 in Ethiopia, Sudan and Senegal. The Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit, which we will host in 2008, and our participation in seven different United Nations and European Union peacekeeping missions in Africa are other concrete examples to this effect.

Turkey also seeks to diversify and expand its network of political and commercial cooperation with the countries of South Asia, the Far East and the Pacific region, as well as Latin American countries and the Caribbean.

Terrorism continues to threaten the security of all free nations. An act of terror committed in any part of the world in essence targets us all, as it constitutes a heinous crime against humanity. We condemn in the strongest terms this scourge that recognizes no national boundaries. As the Prime Minister of a nation that has experienced first-hand the bitter consequences of terrorism, I renew from this rostrum my appeal to the international community for an enhanced collective commitment and cooperation in the combat against this threat to humanity.

Considering the sophisticated new technologies terrorist elements are utilizing today, effective international cooperation to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction takes on a whole new meaning and urgency. Turkey strongly supports the United Nations and the United Nations-led efforts to intensify international cooperation aimed at preventing their proliferation.

Finally, Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have been supporting the efforts to find a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus problem under the good-offices mission of the United Nations Secretary-General on the basis of well established United Nations parameters. The United Nations remains the sole forum for a solution.

It should be recalled that the comprehensive settlement plan of the former United Nations Secretary-General emerged in 2004 as a result of extensive negotiations between the parties and was submitted to a simultaneous referendum on both sides of the island. The Turkish side overwhelmingly voted in favour of the Secretary-General's plan, whose impartiality cannot in any way be called into question. The Greek Cypriots, however, were misled by their leadership to reject the plan.

Despite the constructive attitude displayed by the Turkish side since then, no progress has been achieved towards a settlement owing to the intransigence of the Greek Cypriot side. It is our hope that the Annan report, which has not been endorsed yet by the Security Council, will be endorsed soon.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Head of Government and Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino.

Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Fiorenzo Stolfi, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Stolfi (San Marino) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of San Marino, I join the unanimous tribute paid to you, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session by expressing my most sincere congratulations on your election to this high office. I am confident that you will be able to give new momentum to the process of renewal and reform of the United Nations.

In particular, I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to the outgoing President, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, who has carried out with determination and commitment an intense activity aimed at implementing the reform programme undertaken by the Secretary-General.

The Republic of San Marino is deeply concerned about the latest events in Myanmar and expresses its solidarity to the families of the victims. We hope that the violence will soon be stopped and a dialogue immediately re-established.

The Republic of San Marino firmly believes in the role and effectiveness of the entire structure of the United Nations, as well as in the process of progressive renewal of its main bodies, which is now more than ever necessary, given time, evolution and the need to best enhance the participation by the great family of the Member States in the management of the Organization.

A small country like San Marino gains considerable strength and legitimacy from the major international organizations in its efforts to make its voice heard regarding the great issues and main challenges of our time. We are still determined to play this role and will continue to fulfil the commitments undertaken, individually or in partnership with other countries, to affirm those principles of solidarity and the protection of rights, in which our history is rooted.

In this regard, we believe that forms of cooperation among small countries can prove undoubtedly useful to major projects and deliver positive and effective messages of multilateral cooperation, in a spirit of mutual belonging to an international community, albeit still characterized by large gaps.

In this context, an example is the commitment taken by San Marino, together with a group of small European countries, in favour of a United Nations Children's Fund project against HIV and destined for children living in Gabon. At the same time, the small countries are intensifying their contacts within the United Nations to adopt further joint intervention programmes, mainly of a humanitarian character.

The Republic of San Marino promotes and supports, with the strength of its millenary history of civilization, peace and respect for human rights, any call advanced at a national or international level entailing a moral and civil commitment to the affirmation of specific ideological and cultural identities, which, as is the case for San Marino, are based on the principles of peaceful coexistence and respect for others.

It is in this spirit that my country believes in and actively commits itself to the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as a fundamental instrument to prevent tensions and conflicts arising from intolerance and to promote peace based on the principles of respect for fundamental human rights, justice and international cooperation.

During its six-month chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which ended last May, the Republic of San Marino based its activity on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding by organizing high-level meetings and debates aimed at fostering dialogue among cultures and religions. In this context, the conference organized last April in San Marino on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue in Europe, a priority issue of the San Marino chairmanship, met with great success. This conference was attended by the representatives of the Council of Europe member countries, religious leaders belonging to the three major European monotheistic religions and experts from civil society. At the end of its work, the conference adopted a final document, which testifies to the wide range of this debate and marks a significant moment in the process undertaken by the Council of Europe to promote, stimulate and develop intercultural dialogue in Europe, with particular reference to its religious dimension.

Among the initiatives taken in the last few months on this issue, it is worth mentioning the meeting organized by the Permanent Mission of San Marino in New York on dialogue between religions, with the presence and participation of the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and representatives of more than 70 countries.

In line with its history of peace, which makes it an ideal place for meeting and mediation, the Republic of San Marino will coordinate, starting from next year, the future meetings of the Council of Europe on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. It is in this spirit that I will take part next week in the High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, organized by the presidency of the General Assembly.

My country welcomes the adoption of this initiative, which further stresses the need for us to join our efforts in support of dialogue among cultures and religions, as an instrument to strengthen the climate of confidence indispensable to promote peace, prevent conflicts and combat the threat of discrimination, racism, violence and terrorism.

The Republic of San Marino is particularly sensitive to the issue of climate change, in the conviction that addressing this problem is an imperative for each member of the international community, called upon to take action and share common strategies to prevent and face situations of degradation and extreme emergency, which are becoming increasingly evident and require joint actions that can no longer be postponed. We are witnessing alarming phenomena that are deteriorating every element of the environment, mainly due to human activities. It is therefore necessary to develop alternative strategies, which can protect the climate from the increasingly serious threat posed to the entire ecosystem.

The San Marino Government has expressed its strong determination to progressively accede to the major international instruments, adopted in the framework of the United Nations, on environmental protection and gas emissions, from the Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol thereto, to the Kyoto Protocol, in the awareness that the consequences of climate change are a serious obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. At a domestic level, San Marino is preparing legislation promoting new technologies based on renewable energy sources that will substantially modify the

energetic and environmental habits of the entire country.

Just a few days ago, the Secretary-General organized a high-level event on climate change, which gave further momentum to the activity of our Governments.

It is worth reiterating that we take a strong stance against the death penalty on the basis of political and moral principles. Indeed, the death penalty denies the right to life, and we deem it a groundless deterrent, as do an increasing number of countries, which are progressively abolishing it from their legal systems. The Republic of San Marino expresses its satisfaction at the steps taken in this direction at a multilateral level and supports the new interregional initiative. We are convinced that by promoting first of all a moratorium, each and every country can gradually achieve a moderate attitude and eventually reach the decision to abolish the death penalty.

San Marino fully shares the commitment undertaken on a global scale to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and is ready to offer its own contribution and its partnership to eradicate endemic problems, by fully recognizing the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable groups of society, such as the elderly, women, children and disabled people.

In this regard, I would like to underline in particular the value of the action carried out by the United Nations in favour of social policies addressed to persons with disabilities, which has led to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. In this context, the Republic of San Marino was one of the first States to subscribe to these instruments.

To achieve these objectives, which were also among the main issues included in the programme of the recent chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, my country has launched some awareness raising and effective intervention campaigns, such as the campaign on violence against women and in favour of children's rights.

I wish to refer in particular to the protection of children's rights, to which my country pays special attention, prompted by the conviction that only the mobilization of Governments and societies can save children all over the world from today's sufferings and from enduring conditions of underdevelopment and poverty. My country has promoted legislative measures and solidarity initiatives with the precious contribution of institutions and civil society, and it commits itself at a political, moral and social level to providing any possible instrument of protection and guarantee in favour of minors.

It is in this spirit and in full agreement with the principles contained in the detailed study on violence against children, drafted by United Nations expert Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, that the Republic of San Marino will soon sign the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, adopted by the Council of Europe and aimed at involving the States in the drafting and implementation of an international plan to prevent and counter these phenomena.

San Marino is fully aware of the need for the United Nations to maintain and strengthen its own structure by revitalizing the main bodies, to attain improved efficiency and progressive adjustment to a broader multilateral context.

In the light of the above and well aware of its status as a small country, San Marino is however intensifying its activities within the major international organizations. It has responsibly taken on the task of facilitator assigned to it and to Senegal by the President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in the revitalization process of this organ.

This task, performed by the San Marino Permanent Mission in New York, attributes to this tiny State a delicate and important role at an international level, which certainly represents a significant recognition of the work done since 1992 to the present and of the commitment with which the Republic participates in the life of the international community, with its renewed efforts to enhance dialogue and cooperation.

The objective of revitalizing the General Assembly is a priority in the reform and modernization process of the main bodies of the United Nations, since the General Assembly is the main representative and decision-making body of the Organization, where all States are permanent members and can and must play an important role by virtue of the principles of democracy and equal representation enshrined in this Organization.

The Republic of San Marino believes it necessary to strengthen the role of the General Assembly by enabling it to act efficiently and to cooperate with other statutory bodies in a more coordinated manner. In this regard, San Marino expresses the hope that, in order to fully support the activities of this body, which is responsible for the whole process of standardization and codification of international law, the international community will commit itself to increasingly receiving and implementing its resolutions.

At the same time, it reiterates the need to reach the broadest possible political agreement on the reform of the Security Council. This agreement should be the result of a concerted and open vision in view of any adjustments that may be required in the years to come. For many years, San Marino has constantly paid great attention to this issue of topical interest, because of its strategic and structural implications. In this regard, I believe that today the presidency of the General Assembly deserves our unanimous gratitude for its report, which represents an excellent basis to continue to consider this item on the agenda of the sixty-second session.

On behalf of a State, the Republic of San Marino, that has always based its peaceful coexistence with other States and the spirit of its profound national and international solidarity on aspirations for international peace and security, I would like to express my complete confidence in the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations system. Each and every State must try to make a political and ideological contribution through concrete proposals to that system, on which every State continues to place high expectations because of the impact of its activities at a national and international level.

Allow me to conclude my statement by offering a brief reflection, by virtue of the fact that I come from a country without any macroeconomic or military interests, or any interests regarding the political balance among the great Powers. I believe that the space and attention we all devote to the international commitment and contribution made by every State, even the smallest, can be a positive investment in the future of the United Nations, a future characterized by increased understanding, closer cooperation and the promotion of dialogue and mutual respect, upon which the foundations of this Organization rest.

This renewed momentum will therefore provide large countries with the opportunity to demonstrate their full respect for international justice and will show small countries how useful their activities are in the community of nations — activities that translate into continuous efforts aimed at achieving peace, mutual understanding and better living conditions for all peoples.

With those hopes in mind, I express to you, Sir, my most sincere wishes for a successful presidency of this greatest of world assemblies, and I assure you that you can fully rely on our support throughout the sixty-second session.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government of the Republic of San Marino for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fiorenzo Stolfi, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs and Economic Planning of the Republic of San Marino, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Year after year the international community meets in New York in September to debate the major issues of concern to humankind. This traditional encounter is of special importance in that it enables us to grasp very directly and intensively, in all their complexity, the challenges that confront us, but also to bolster our determination to search for common solutions. That is the very essence of the effective multilateralism that, with great conviction, my country, Luxembourg, has placed at the heart of its international action.

And what could be a stronger illustration of this shared perception of what is at stake globally and this resolve to seek viable solutions in the short, medium and long, even very long, term than the high-level event organized at the beginning of the week at the initiative of the Secretary-General devoted to the problems of climate change?

As already said on behalf of the European Union by the Prime Minister of Portugal (see A/62/PV.4), whose statement I fully support, it is essential that December's Bali negotiations on an effective and

viable post-Kyoto regime get off to a successful start. That is our most basic responsibility vis-à-vis present and future generations. For its part, as a member of the European Union and a State party to the Kyoto Protocol, Luxembourg, which has already undertaken weighty individual commitments, is ready to engage with great resolve in the quest for innovative and bold solutions.

In order to address successfully the problems of climate change, we must tackle them in all their complexity. In this regard, it should be noted that in the absence of concerted and energetic international action, there is a great risk that countries and populations that have contributed the least to the emergence of this phenomenon are likely to be the ones to bear the heaviest adverse consequences.

This, as I see it, is a political problem — and, I would say, a moral problem — of the first order. More than ever, the issue of development and hence of sustainable development both in the North and in the South must remain in the forefront of international attention. Important decisions have already been taken. Here, I would refer in particular to the decision taken by the European Union in 2005 under the Luxembourg presidency to attain the objective of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA) by 2015. Faced with the risk of stagnation in ODA, we must redouble our efforts to meet our commitments.

A member of this all-too select "0.7 Group" — with ODA that in 2007 reached close to 0.9 per cent of gross national income, and looking forward to achieving the objective of 1 per cent that we have set for ourselves — Luxembourg can only look forward to the expansion of this club.

The year that lies ahead is crucial from the standpoint of development. There will be a need to undertake resolutely, and in a way that seeks a convergence, the World Trade Organization trade negotiations, the follow-up to Monterrey in the area of financing for development, and the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Only if we adopt generous and courageous policies will we be able to build on these advances and reduce the delays that unfortunately persist, particularly in a number of sub-Saharan African countries, with regard to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The convening in 2008 of a high-level meeting on mid-term implementation of the Millennium Development Goals would undoubtedly be a good opportunity to take stock and relaunch our efforts. Here I would also applaud the recent establishment at the initiative of the Secretary-General of the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group. I am convinced that this will make a significant contribution in terms of coordination and intensification of efforts vis-à-vis a continent with which Luxembourg maintains relations of intense and multifaceted cooperation.

The problems associated with climate change and sustainable development bring me to another subject that is dear to my heart and is at the core of the international activities of the Luxembourg Government: humanitarian action. When it first discussed the question of climate change (see S/PV.5663), the Security Council highlighted the numerous complex interactions that could exist among natural disasters, the stepping up of violent conflicts within and among States and humanitarian disasters in various parts of the world. We must tackle these emergency situations on the operational level, seeking to make our action as efficient and prompt as possible. But there is also a need increasingly to place these emergency situations in their political, socio-economic and cultural context in order to try to mitigate their effects and, as far as possible, to prevent recurrence.

It is from this standpoint that a new Luxembourg Government strategy in the area of humanitarian crisis management has recently been presented. The strategy that rests on three pillars: emergency relief; rehabilitation and reconstruction in the transitional phase; and prevention.

On the basis of the United Nations finding that one euro invested in prevention may make it possible to save eight euros in crisis response and resolution, nearly 5 per cent of the Luxembourg humanitarian budget will henceforth be devoted to a proactive, preventive approach.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome, which is more than ever the road map for international action, stressed the fundamental finding according to which, "development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing" (*resolution 60/1, para. 9*).

For my part, I believe that this is a cardinal principle that should guide and inspire all action by the United Nations and its Member States from an overall standpoint of coherence in addressing the great problems of the time: conflicts in Africa — and I am thinking particularly of the situations with tragic humanitarian consequences currently prevailing in the Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and, to be sure, Zimbabwe; the Middle East, where it is important to support fully ongoing Israeli and Palestinian efforts and to progress ultimately towards a negotiated solution of two States living side by side in peace and security, and also towards a lasting solution for the whole region; and Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar and other hotbeds of violence and instability. There is no denying that we must take into account simultaneously the dimensions of peace and security, human rights, States rights, the rule of law and socio-economic development.

I would like now to speak of the courage of the Burmese monks and other citizens who for weeks have been peacefully expressing their aspiration to democracy and respect for human rights. I condemn most energetically the violence of the Burmese security forces against these peaceful demonstrators and call the authorities to put an end to it.

The imperative that I mentioned a moment ago can also be seen very clearly in the work of a new and innovative organ, of which Luxembourg has been a member since the beginning of the year: the Peacebuilding Commission. The integrated peacebuilding strategies for each of the countries concerned should take into account all the factors involved in order once and for all to break the cycles of violence and place those countries on a stable track towards development. I would like also to mention in this context the essential dimension of reconciliation and combating impunity and to applauding in particular the activities of the various international courts, in particular the International Criminal Court.

The protection and promotion of human rights is one of the key focuses of Luxembourg's foreign policy. I continue to place great hope in the new Human Rights Council, which has just finished setting up its institutional structures, including, in particular, the universal periodic review mechanism, which is a significant innovation.

Faithful to its convictions and commitments, my country fully associates itself with the initiatives announced by a group of States from all parts of the world aimed at making progress in the international debate on the question of abolishing the death penalty.

In this rapid overview of the international situation in the area of peace and security, allow me to linger for a moment on an important issue that is of such concern to both the United Nations and the European Union, namely Kosovo. The last act of the Yugoslav tragedy, an urgent solution for the Kosovo issue must be found. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, President Ahtisaari, has been working energetically to establish, in keeping with the established guidelines, the basis of the future status of Kosovo. The Troika of representatives from the European Union, the United States and Russia is also committed to a final attempt to bring the two parties together. These efforts have been continued in recent days in New York. As members know, the parties are even now meeting in this building; I have high hopes that dialogue will ensue. The Troika has agreed to submit its report to the Secretary-General by 10 December. I reiterate that the European Union is ready to fully assume its responsibilities in the region, for which a European future lies ahead.

I turn my attention to another issue that is of concern to international public opinion and whose potential impact on peace and security is very worrisome: the area of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. A few days ago, I had the opportunity to state the views of the Luxembourg Government at the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna. Here at the General Assembly I advocate once again for continued efforts in the area of nuclear disarmament and a strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, of which the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is and should remain the keystone.

Mr. Romero-Martinez (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I would also like to speak briefly about other types of arms with destabilizing effects or unacceptable consequences for civilians; small arms and light weapons and sub-munitions. I hope that significant advances may soon be made, on those two categories of weapons in particular. The Luxembourg Government for its part intends to participate actively in this debate

and is currently preparing a bill forbidding the manufacture, storage, utilization and trade in weapons employing sub-munitions.

The quest for international disarmament and the strengthening of international regimes on weapons of mass destruction consistently remain objectives of the Luxembourg Government, because of the serious concern we feel as we observe certain current developments with regard to respect for existing international norms, in particular with reference to the Iranian issue.

While the agreement that has just been concluded between the secretariat of the International Atomic Energy Agency — specifically Mr. ElBaradei — and the Islamic Republic of Iran goes in the right direction, we note with concern that Iran has not yet taken the necessary measures to bring itself into conformity with the three relevant resolutions of the Security Council. I appeal to Iran finally to take that action and to suspend all activities linked to enrichment.

On the set of issues that I have just mentioned, the Charter has entrusted a central role to the Security Council. It is essential for the Council to adapt to the political realities of the beginning of the twenty-first century by enlarging its membership in the categories of permanent and non-permanent members, guaranteeing an appropriate place for the small States that represent the vast majority of States Members of the Organization. It is important also to modernize the Council's functioning for the sake of enhanced effectiveness and transparency, with broader involvement for the entire membership. On the basis of the consensus decision that was adopted at the end of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly (see A/61/PV.109), I venture to hope that significant progress will be achieved in the area of Security Council reform in months to come. My country is eager to make its contribution to the achievement of the purposes of the Charter and to shoulder its share of responsibility in international peace and security, and thus wishes to become — for the first time since it placed its signature on the San Francisco Charter in 1945 — a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2013 and 2014.

Security Council reform is an important portion of the United Nations reform agenda outlined at the 2005 Summit. If recourse to a multilateral machinery, with the United Nations at its core, is to be credible, then the tool made available to the international community must be commensurate with the developments of our time and capable of responding adequately to the expectations of efficiency and effectiveness harboured by States and peoples worldwide.

The reform effort should be pursued and supported with conviction by a revitalized General Assembly, exercising its prerogatives with energy and discernment and achieving its priority objectives. Reform, and thus the modernization of multilateralism, can succeed only if it rests on the common will of all Member States.

That applies in particular to the field of system-wide coherence in operational activities. To overcome the fragmentation that has developed over more than 60 years of United Nations history, to restore to the system and its actors a more effective capacity for action, particularly at the level of the countries and populations concerned, and to strengthen operational coherence in the eight areas covered by the report of the High-level Panel (A/61/583) are primary objectives for the performance and thus the credibility of the United Nations system. They are also decisions that need to be taken courageously and proactively in the appropriate forums.

While the success of reform would be reflected in a win-win-win situation for donor countries, recipient countries and the United Nations as a whole, as Mr. Ban Ki-moon has rightly said, the failure of reform would be likely to marginalize the entire system over the long term. The choice is before us; we must shoulder our political responsibilities.

More than ever, effective multilateralism is a great hope of our populations aspiring to a more just, more peaceful and more prosperous world, where the great ecological balance is preserved and where every man and every woman can live in dignity and in full enjoyment of his or her human rights. Let us not disappoint that expectation.

And let us remember this very wise saying from the Roman philosopher Seneca: It is not because it is difficult that we do not dare to do it; it is because we do not dare to do it that it is difficult.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdelwaheb

Abdallah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Abdallah (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express to His Excellency Mr. Srgjan Kerim and to his friendly country our most sincere congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We are confident that under his skilful and effective leadership, our deliberations will be successful.

I wish also to extend to our sister, Her Excellency Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, our deep thanks and appreciation for her valuable efforts as President of the Assembly at its previous session towards the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and towards enhancing dialogue among all members of the international community and reviving the Security Council reform process.

I wish also to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his endeavours and his determination to reform the functioning of the Organization. We wish him every success.

Signs of new dynamism in the United Nations reform process reflect a true desire to improve the Organization's work so as to bring it in line with the requirements of the new world realities and with new concepts arising from the profound and speedy transformations the world has experienced in recent decades.

In our view, giving effect to that desire requires new working frameworks and mechanisms to reinforce the underpinnings of international peace and security and enable us to achieve collective solutions to the common challenges facing the international community. We should be inspired in that endeavour by a new vision that lays the foundation for a comprehensive, effective and solidarity-based global partnership among the members of the international community, on the basis of constructive dialogue among peoples, cultures, civilizations and religions.

On the basis of that conviction, Tunisia has launched international initiatives with political, humanitarian and social dimensions. Some of these initiatives were adopted by the United Nations, such as the establishment of the World Solidarity Fund. We look forward to increased efforts by the international community to operationalize the Fund.

The President returned to the Chair.

Since the early 1990s, Tunisia has been in the forefront of countries drawing attention to the dangers of terrorism and its negative impact on world security and stability. Today, Tunisia renews its call for an international conference, under United Nations auspices, in order to formulate an international code of conduct for combating terrorism, by which all parties would abide.

Convinced of the significant role that dialogue among civilizations plays in obviating the dangers of extremism and intolerance, Tunisia has consistently endeavoured to be the world capital of dialogue among civilizations, by hosting several regional and international conferences and seminars. It has also taken initiatives in this field, such as the publication of the Carthage Charter for Tolerance in 1995, the appeal by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali for a pedagogy of tolerance, the 2001 Tunis Declaration on Dialogue among Civilizations, and the establishment, in the University of Tunis, of the Ben Ali Chair for Dialogue among Civilizations and Religions.

We take note with satisfaction of the focus on the theme of climate change during the current session's general debate, in view of the fact that environmental issues are a basic pillar of sustainable development and one of the major elements of the Millennium Development Goals — one that has an impact on international peace and security.

Tunisia believes that climate change poses a common threat to all States of the world without exception. This has prompted Tunisia to host, next November, an international ministerial workshop to discuss climate change in Africa and the Mediterranean region, as a contribution to increasing and deepening awareness of the importance of this issue and to enriching regional dialogue on it.

The international community and all its members must devote more attention to the environment and to finding urgent and effective collective solutions to environmental issues in certain regions of the world — notably in Africa, which suffers most from the climate change that is threatening the continent's aspirations to development and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The fact that several important international political problems remain unsolved continues to be a source of concern for us. Today, Tunisia reaffirms that it upholds the values of peace and justice and the

principles of international legitimacy, and that it is prepared to contribute to the dissemination and promotion of the values of tolerance, moderation and mutual respect among nations and peoples. In our view, that should help consolidate a constructive dialogue among civilizations and establish international cooperation and a solidarity-based development partnership that will help eliminate the causes of tension and conflict worldwide

On this occasion, we reaffirm our principled and constant support for the Palestinian people in their struggle for their just cause. We urge the international community, in particular the influential parties and the Quartet, to intensify their efforts aimed at reviving the peace process, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the relevant Arab and international terms of reference, inter alia, the Arab Peace Initiative, with a view to finding a just and comprehensive solution that would guarantee the restoration of the Palestinians' legitimate rights, foremost among which is the establishment of their own independent State.

We welcome the initiative taken by President Bush and certain international influential parties to revive the peace process. In this context, we wish to stress the importance of convening an international peace conference that should yield concrete proposals for achieving a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and lead to the restitution of all occupied Arab territories and guarantee security and stability to all the countries and peoples of the region.

By the same token, we call for concerted regional and international efforts to help the brotherly Iraqi people to restore the deteriorating security, economic and humanitarian situation in their country, through the achievement of a consensual political settlement among all its segments and factions that preserves the unity and sovereignty of Iraq. As far as the situation in Lebanon is concerned, we urge all Lebanese parties to favour dialogue as the sole way to prevent the scourge of dissension among the Lebanese people and to restore confidence and reconciliation among them.

Since 7 November 1987, Tunisia, under the leadership of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, has succeeded in making pioneer achievements and gains in different fields. This has been made possible thanks to comprehensive reforms that allowed Tunisia to consolidate the rule of law and institutions, as well as public freedoms, and to disseminate, in theory and practice, the culture of human rights, thus enhancing the democratic structure of the country and paving the way for contributions by all components of civil society to define national orientations and choices for the future.

The reform process implemented in Tunisia has allowed the achievement of numerous Millennium Development Goals, which has translated into better living standards for Tunisians and well-being for all segments of Tunisian society. This reflects the correctness of development choices made by Tunisia, which has also allowed it to hold an advanced position among countries with the highest level of human development.

On many occasions, Tunisia has stated its conviction of the need for building international cooperation and partnerships based on a comprehensive approach aimed at achieving development for all and laying the foundations for constructive relations among countries of the North and the South. In this context, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali called from this rostrum in 1989 for the adoption of a charter of peace and progress between the countries of the North and the South.

The international community is called upon to exert more efforts to enable all the peoples of the world, particularly the least developed countries, to benefit from the digital revolution and to acquire knowledge. This will require operationalizing and implementing the recommendations and resolutions made by international conferences in our country in November 2005 to contribute to the building of a global, more equitable and solidarity-based information society.

The integration of Tunisia in its regional and international environment is one of the priorities of its foreign policy, which endeavours to enhance political relations with brotherly and friendly nations as well with regional and international organizations. Tunisia looks forward to the broadening and diversification of the scope of its cooperation with all its partners in order to bring it to the level of an efficient partnership based on mutual respect and common interest. Hence, Tunisia is constantly striving, with its brotherly Maghrebian countries, to complete the formation of the Maghreb Arab Union and to consolidate its structures and institutions in order to reinforce integration and complementarity among the peoples of the region.

Tunisia has equally sought to enhance the effectiveness of Arab common action. It seeks to upgrade its interaction with the changes and challenges confronting the region and to further the process of reform and modernization in this field, in conformity with the decisions and recommendations of the Tunis Summit, the Algiers Summit and the Riyadh Summit.

On the other hand, Tunisia, being a member of Arab committees entrusted with Palestinian, Lebanese and other issues, is participating effectively in the work of those committees for the benefit of Arab causes.

As far as Africa is concerned, Tunisia has enhanced its relations with African countries and has strengthened cooperation with them. It has made active efforts to contribute effectively to the process of building the structures and institutions of the African Union and to the consolidation of the fundamentals of peace, security and stability in the continent and opening promising new horizons for development in order to further enhance integration among its peoples.

In view of the strategic importance of its relations with the European Union, Tunisia has been constantly seeking to advance those ties and to broaden their scope, so as to cover all fields of cooperation with the aim of building a solidarity-based partnership with European Union countries based on mutual respect and common interest.

Tunisia also endeavours to strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation process. In this connection, Tunisia has welcomed the initiative launched by President Nicolas Sarkozy of France for establishing a Mediterranean Union. Tunisia has further expressed its readiness to contribute to and participate in shaping the content of such a union and in defining its objectives.

Since the establishment of the United Nations, Tunisia has expressed constant faith in the noble principles and purposes of the Organization. It has always been committed to lending its support to efforts aimed at creating favourable conditions for appropriate collective responses to global common challenges and for solving the various problems that are a source of concern to the world, as well as establishing solidarity-based cooperation and partnership among all components of the international community.

From this perspective, Tunisia, which will assume chairmanship of the next session of the Conference on Disarmament, is determined to work, in coordination with Member States, for the achievement of tangible progress regarding issues on the agenda of the Conference. In so doing, Tunisia will seek to enhance constructive and positive dialogue on those issues in order to achieve the objectives of the Conference and to contribute to the consolidation of peace and security in the world and to the dissemination of a global culture of peace, thus consecrating the noble values and principles for which our Organization has been created.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Traditionally, the General Assembly sums up the results of the ending political year. This requires serious and joint consideration. It is essential to identify agreed solutions for today's global problems based on the collective analysis of current international affairs. It appears that no one is challenging that security and prosperity are inseparable in an increasingly globalized world. Our approach should be similarly comprehensive, taking into account the inseparable link between the issues of peace and development, which has been amply proven by our recent experience.

The expanding range of conflicts in international politics through the exacerbation of regional crises, the increasing threat of terrorism, the risk of the spread of weapons of mass destruction and stagnation on disarmament jeopardize international stability, divert resources from constructive uses and undermines the potential for sustainable worldwide economic growth. And it is such growth that is our common fundamental goal. Poverty and economic backwardness expand the breeding ground for extremism.

On the other hand, developments over the past year provide convincing proof that an essentially new geopolitical situation has been developing in the world, one that is defined primarily by emerging multipolarity. We need to agree on what inferences we can draw from this. In his Munich speech in February, President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation called for an open and sincere dialogue that would enable us to work out a common understanding of the current historical epoch and of the modus operandi it obliges our nations to adopt.

The international landscape is changing, due to newly emerging centres of global growth. Today, nobody can cope with global challenges single-handedly. Neither diktat nor bipolar dominance can fulfil the task of world governance. What is needed is collective leadership by major States; this should be representative both geographically and in terms of civilizations. The basis for such an informal mechanism can be provided only by the United Nations with its unique legitimacy.

Multilateral diplomacy based on international law has come to the fore. Like any society of free people, a world of free nations needs universal regulatory principles to ensure predictability and confidence in international affairs. The way to achieve this goal lies through strengthening the United Nations system by further adapting it to modern global realities. Decisions here should be based on the broadest possible consensus among Member States and on the universal intergovernmental nature of the United Nations. It is from that perspective that we view the reform initiatives proposed by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

It will be in our common interest to make more active use of United Nations peacekeeping capabilities. These could be improved by more effective use of a body such as the Military Staff Committee. The initiative put forward by the President of Russia in 2000 to enhance the work of the Military Staff Committee remains relevant. Naturally, a renewed Committee should operate with the participation of all members of the Security Council, as provided for in the United Nations Charter.

Much remains to be done also in improving the interaction of the United Nations with regional organizations that have proven their ability to effectively participate in resolving security and development issues. A positive interrelationship between the principles of multilateralism and regionalism is obviously very important. At present, more than 50 per cent of international trade is carried out under regional trade agreements. Global trade regulation mechanisms cannot be effective without regional integration, which is key to the economic well-being of all the regions of the world.

Russia is actively signing and using regional trade agreements to achieve mutual liberalization of trade. Russia intends to use its current chairmanship of the Eurasian Economic Community to give a more practical focus to the organization, which since 2003 has had observer status in the General Assembly. Russia, along with other sponsors, will submit to the General Assembly a draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community, aimed at providing a more systemic basis and facilitating the timely realization of the Millennium Development Goals. We also hope that United Nations Member States would honour the Eurasian Development Bank the status of observer in the General Assembly. We shall actively promote the attainment of these objectives, including in the framework of the process to reinvigorate the Commonwealth of Independent States and build up strategic offensive capabilities.

The international community's efforts should remain focused on reaching the Millennium Development Goals. We are concerned that today, seven years since the Millennium Summit, many developing countries, especially the least developed countries, are still significantly behind schedule in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Particular attention should be paid to the specific needs of the African continent.

Russia fully shares the principles of global partnership in the interest of development, as approved at the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and intends to increase its input to our common efforts in that area. We shall consistently strengthen our position as a donor country in accordance with the approach to Russian participation in international development assistance approved by President Putin in June 2007.

We are confident that concrete steps to ensure sustainable socio-economic development in all regions are a sure remedy against threats to peace and security.

There is a pressing need to use any means available to strengthen the leading role of the United Nations in fighting terrorism. Here, the Organization's activities should be based on a comprehensive framework, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted last year as resolution 60/288, and on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. The Collective Security Treaty Organization is contributing to these efforts and has established useful interaction with the United Nations.

Our efforts to resolve regional conflicts and urgent social and economic problems should form part of our counter-terrorism efforts.

Iraq has become a source of destabilization for the whole region. Ensuring security, not to mention economic development, in that country requires a new strategy focused on reaching genuine national reconciliation with the participation of all of Iraq's neighbours and with the support of the international community. We call upon the Secretary-General to take an active role in this issue, given the additional power the United Nations can wield towards an Iraqi settlement. The participants in recent multilateral meetings on Iraq have upheld that approach, and we support the decision endorsed at those meetings.

The indivisibility of security is to be seen clearly in the Middle East. Early solution of the Palestine problem based on the two-State concept and the achievement of a comprehensive Middle East settlement underpinned by the international legal platform developed by the United Nations are next on the agenda. We are convinced that this goal could be advanced by holding a representative international conference preceded by thorough preparation. We consider the United States initiative to convene in November a multiparty meeting on a Middle East settlement as a step in that direction. We appreciate the preliminary considerations voiced by the United States side regarding the agenda and composition of that event. We reaffirm the importance of involving the Quartet of international mediators and the Arab League in the preparations.

Settlement of the Kosovo problem is only possible within the framework of international and law based on negotiations. Unilateral steps will not lead to a lasting peace and will create the risk of destabilization in the Balkans and other regions.

Complex problems require an integrated approach. This is particularly true for the situation around Iran. The goal of nuclear non-proliferation is an absolute priority. At the same time, we should not ignore the task of engaging Iran in constructive efforts to resolve regional and international issues.

Urgent steps are needed to strengthen the non-proliferation regime while providing all States with legitimate access to the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The joint initiative of the Presidents of Russia and the United States, put forward at their Kennebunkport meeting, is aimed at starting joint practical work in this field.

We are confident that today peace should be based on willingness to cooperate, especially on matters directly affecting strategic stability. In this context, we cannot neglect the unilateral plans in the area of missile defence. President Putin has proposed a constructive alternative: collaborative work with the participation of Russia, the United States and Europe, and subsequently with that of other countries. Such work could lead to a genuinely global strategic alliance encompassing the entire Euro-Atlantic region, which would allow us to move forward in establishing an open system of collective security. Our proposals are under discussion, and we hope that the collective approach will prevail.

The principle of the indivisibility of security should form the basis for resolving the situation around the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. Russia stands ready to engage in that process, and proposals are well known. We expect that these proposals will be seriously discussed during the upcoming consultations.

The possibility of deploying weapons in outer space poses a serious threat. The magnitude of that threat is determined by the global coverage of the deployment, which can endanger all States without exception. We consistently oppose the deployment in space of weapons of any type, and we call upon the international community to conclude an agreement to that effect.

Another outstanding global issue is the effective prevention of climate change, which requires agreed and scientifically based solutions that are realistic and balanced and that do not undercut countries' right to development. Russia has always stood for a constructive dialogue with a view to giving a genuinely universal character to the international climate protection regime. We hope that the important meetings that took place this week in New York and Washington will facilitate thorough preparations for a successful launch in December in Bali of negotiations on joint post-2012 efforts.

The spiritual and moral foundations of human solidarity are of increasingly vital importance. The spiritual values of all world religions demand that we achieve intercivilizational accord and fight manifestations of xenophobia and racism, as well as

the resurgence of neo-Nazi trends. Those are the tasks to be tackled within the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations, which we support. The World Summit of Religious Leaders held in Moscow last year added a new dimension to this endeavour. We propose to build upon the results of the Summit and to think about establishing, under United Nations auspices, a special forum — a kind of consultative council of religions — for exchanges of views among representatives of major world faiths.

Russia will spare no effort to strengthen multilateral cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. I am convinced that with a continued commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter, we can make progress in the creation of an effective system of collective security, as was the will of the founding fathers of the world Organization.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yang Jiechi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Yang Jiechi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I am convinced that under your able leadership, the current session will be a fruitful one. I also wish to thank Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for her contribution during her presidency of the previous session.

The current international environment is highly complex. Mankind is facing both unprecedented opportunities and challenges. There is a growing trend towards peace, development and cooperation in the world. But, on the other hand, traditional and non-traditional security threats are intertwined; hotspot issues are acute; the gap between the North and South is widening; trade protectionism is resurfacing; and developing countries generally remain in a disadvantaged position. The steady trend towards economic globalization and towards a multi-polar world is fostering a new way of thinking about international relations.

In this Hall two years ago, Chinese President Hu Jintao called on mankind to build a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity in the twenty-first century (see A/60/PV.5). The core message of his call is that, while recognizing the diversity of the world, differences of interests and diversity of cultures, we should harmonize interests, defuse conflicts and promote cooperation for win-win progress in a peaceful and cooperative manner.

In its 62-year history, the United Nations has played an irreplaceable role in promoting humankind's cause of peace and development. The current session of the General Assembly should focus on promoting harmonious coexistence among countries. Resolving hotspot issues and peacefully settling international disputes through dialogue and cooperation are not only explicitly called for by the United Nations Charter. They are also the right way to uphold world peace and stability and achieve mutual benefit and a win-win situation for all.

China remains committed to seeking a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula through dialogue to uphold peace and stability on the peninsula and throughout North-East Asia. The Six-Party Talks have become an important platform for the parties concerned to maintain dialogue and consultations on achieving denuclearization on the peninsula, normalizing relations between the countries concerned and building a new harmonious architecture in North-East Asia. We will continue to play a constructive role in advancing the process of the Six-Party Talks and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Diplomatic negotiations are the best option for resolving the Iranian nuclear issue peacefully and meeting the common interests of the international community. China opposes nuclear-weapon proliferation and stands for upholding the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and peace and stability in the Middle East. No non-proliferation effort should deviate from the goal of upholding international peace and stability. Countries should honour their due international obligations, and their right to peaceful use of nuclear energy should be fully respected. China urges the parties concerned to show flexibility and resume negotiations at an early date. China will continue to contribute its share to the peaceful settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue.

The Palestine-Israel conflict is at the core of the Middle East issue. China supports the just cause of the Palestinian and other Arab peoples and the restoration of their lawful national rights, and it sincerely hopes that Arab countries and Israel will promptly end their disputes through political negotiations on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and the principle of

land for peace. China calls on Palestine to strengthen its unity and welcomes the initiative to hold an international conference on the Middle East. We hope that the Iraqi people will continue to work for national reconciliation and restore peace and stability at an early date, and that this will lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting resolution of the Middle East issue.

The trilateral dialogue and consultation among the United Nations, the African Union and the Sudanese Government on an equal footing is an effective mechanism for resolving the Darfur issue. The international community should work to sustain the current sound momentum and give full play to the role of the trilateral mechanism as the main channel. We should adhere to dual-track strategy, promote balanced progress in peacekeeping operations and the political process and seek a lasting solution to the Darfur issue through making progress in the security, political, humanitarian, economic and social areas. China is committed to a proper settlement of the Darfur issue. It has provided humanitarian assistance to Darfur on a number of occasions and will send a military engineering unit to join the peacekeeping operations there. China will continue to firmly support the peace and national reconciliation process in the Sudan and will contribute to the resolution of the Darfur issue and peace, stability and development in the Sudan.

At its current session, the General Assembly should promote the peaceful development of all countries. Poverty is a major source of disputes, and only development can eliminate poverty. Human development concerns us all. Obviously, it is impossible to build common prosperity when there is a huge chasm between the North and the South. The international community should act with a sense of urgency and redouble its efforts to deliver the Millennium Development Goals, narrow the North-South gap and, in particular, meet Africa's special development needs. Developed countries should increase assistance, further open their domestic markets, transfer more technologies to developing countries and provide greater debt relief to them.

For their part, developing countries, on their part, should adopt development strategies and policies suited to their national conditions and boost their economic development. We should support an open, equitable and fair multilateral trade regime and oppose trade protectionism. We should work for an early, comprehensive and balanced outcome of the Doha Round negotiations and make it a development round. Reform of the international economic system should fully reflect changes in the world economy and should give developing countries more say and greater representation in the international economic system.

China gives a high priority to strengthening international cooperation on development as it develops itself. We seek coordinated and balanced global development. While a developing country itself, China has all along provided assistance to African countries and other developing countries, according to its ability, and has helped them to improve their capacity for independent and sustainable development. That is because we believe that lasting peace and the common prosperity of the world is possible only with the development of developing countries.

To help Africa attain stability, security and sustainable development is the common responsibility of the international community. China and African countries enjoy mutual political respect and equality and economic mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. They support one another and maintain close consultation in international affairs. We draw on one another's strengths in governance to promote development. Thanks to our joint efforts, China-Africa cooperation has yielded fruitful results. Such cooperation is well received by the African countries, and it has brought great benefits to both the Chinese and African peoples. China's cooperation with Africa facilitates Africa's cooperation with other countries and is not targeted against any third party.

The current session of the General Assembly should be devoted to promoting harmony between man and nature. Development in the world has both advanced material progress and caused ecological imbalance and environmental pollution. To protect our common homeland is a matter of vital importance for our common future.

Climate change is an environmental issue, but ultimately it is an issue of development. It has arisen in the course of development and can be resolved only through development. We should uphold the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol and adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Developed countries should face up to their responsibilities, fulfil their commitments on emissions reduction in earnest and

continue to take the lead in emissions reduction after 2012. We should strengthen international cooperation on energy, resources and the environment, step up efforts to develop and introduce energy-conserving technologies, environmental protection technologies and low-carbon energy technologies, and establish reasonable mechanisms for financing and technology transfer. That will enable developing countries to gain access to and afford advanced environmental-protection technologies, enhance capacity to respond to climate change and effectively address climate change through achieving sustainable development.

China takes climate change seriously. Though its current per capita carbon dioxide emissions are less than one third of the average of developed countries, China, acting in a way that is highly responsible to mankind, has taken many effective measures to tackle climate change, including adopting a series of laws and regulations and setting the goals of reducing energy intensity and increasing forest cover. The Chinese Government has set the following targets: to reduce energy intensity and total discharge of major pollutants by about 20 per cent and 10 per cent respectively and to increase the forest cover rate to 20 per cent for the period between the end of 2005 and 2010. Under its National Climate Change Programme, China will take an active part in international cooperation in climate change and contribute its share to protecting the global climate.

Advancing United Nations reform and enabling the Organization to play a more important role in maintaining world peace, promoting common development and strengthening cooperation among countries is crucial to building a harmonious world. China supports the reform of the United Nations. The reform decisions made at the high-level meeting marking the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations held in 2005 should be implemented in a comprehensive and balanced manner. Priority should be given to reform in the area of development, and the United Nations should increase its input in that area. The Human Rights Council should build on the outcome of reform in its previous phase and become a platform for dialogue and cooperation rather than an arena for political confrontation. Security Council reform should give priority to increasing the representation of developing countries and give small and medium-sized countries more opportunities to participate in decision-making. Reform proposals should be based on the widest possible consensus. China is ready to work with all other parties to turn reform into a process of strengthening consultation and dialogue and promoting solidarity and cooperation among all United Nations Member States.

China is committed to building a society of democracy, the rule of law, equity and justice, integrity and amity, vitality, stability and order, where people live in harmony with nature. To achieve that goal, China is fully implementing the outcomes of scientific thinking on development. We are working to boost social productivity and ensure people's rights in the political, economic, cultural, social and other fields. By striving to build a harmonious society and by improving the material and cultural life of one fifth of the world's population, China is making a true contribution to the building of a harmonious world.

China has always pursued its own development as a part of the global effort to promote the common progress of mankind. In international affairs, we are committed to the following goals: promoting participation in international affairs by all countries on an equal footing and democracy in international relations; enabling all countries to share the benefits of economic globalization and progress in science and technology for a win-win outcome; promoting exchanges and understanding among civilizations and diversity in the world; enhancing dialogue and trust among countries; and jointly tackling global issues. China unswervingly pursues a path of peaceful development and will continue to make further contributions to humankind's cause of peace and development.

Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. We will not permit any challenge to the one-China principle and General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI). For 15 years running, since 1993, the General Assembly has rejected the inclusion of Taiwan-related issues in the agenda of the General Assembly session. This fully demonstrates that any move that runs counter to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter or attempts to distort and deny General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) will not receive any support from the United Nations Member States and is doomed to failure. We hope that the countries concerned will not allow themselves to be manipulated by the Taiwan authorities and will stop making wrong moves of this kind.

The Taiwan authorities are now obstinately clinging to the separatist course of "Taiwan independence" and are trying by all means to secure a referendum on applying for membership of the United Nations under the name Taiwan. This is another dangerous step towards "de jure Taiwan independence" taken by the Chen Shui-bian authorities. If unchecked, this move will gravely endanger peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the Asia-Pacific region. The Chinese Government has always made every effort to promote with all sincerity peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and to seek peaceful reunification. However, we will never allow anyone to separate Taiwan from China in name or in any other way. We hope that the international community will continue to support China's cause of peaceful reunification, support the Chinese people in opposing and repulsing separatist activities for "Taiwan independence" and work with us to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits and in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Olympic Games, which represent humanity's aspiration for peace, development, cooperation and friendship, will for the first time be held in China, a country both ancient and youthful, starting on 8 August 2008. One World, One Dream — this is the theme of the Beijing Olympic Games. The 1.3 billion people in China, together with the rest of the world, are eagerly looking forward to the opening of the Games. The 2008 Olympic Games are a great event for both the Chinese people and the other peoples of the world. We are confident that with the efforts made by the Chinese people and with strong support from the international community, the 2008 Olympic Games will stand out as a highly successful event.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Six years ago, in September 2001, we, the representatives of the international community, stood united and in solidarity in the face of international terrorism. In all our languages, faiths and cultures, we expressed our condemnation of any terrorist act that targets innocent civilians. We denounced and deplored such acts, then resolved to work seriously to combat this grave and alarming phenomenon. We agreed to work earnestly, not only to deal with terrorism from a security perspective, but also to achieve long-awaited breakthroughs in the old crises and conflicts, which because of their complexity and longevity have overwhelmed the desperate and the hopeless in our particular region. Those conflicts fuel people's sense of injustice and despair and push them into the ranks of those who espouse dark extremist ideas that consider violence as the only means of operation and even sometimes as an end in itself.

We were all prepared for action. There was a widespread belief in the Middle East region that major breakthroughs were imminent, that the successful containment and eradication of international terrorism would take place not only through security operations but also through concurrent actions of equal importance aimed at draining its intellectual resources and freezing its human and financial assets.

However, we seem to have gone astray during those six years. Our objectives were fragmented, and our energies were scattered. We failed as an international community to maintain the huge momentum generated in this very Hall in September 2001, that momentum which found expression in our resolve to work together to defuse tensions in our region as a step towards the settlement of its chronic political conflicts.

Regrettably, narrow-minded, domestic political agendas have been imposed by some, and unwise objectives have replaced the lofty ones that we had planned to achieve. Instead of focusing on the eradication of the hotbeds of international terrorism — hotbeds which were not numerous six years ago — we lost sight of our main goal and vision. The eradication of international terrorism was no longer the goal but instead became a loose phrase. There was oppression, torture and humiliation, and, on the other side, more violence, resistance and atrocities.

This came as no surprise to us, since the objective was regrettably lost. We all stood stunned and flabbergasted before the events that were unfolding in this region and the world. How could we have been diverted from our goal? How could it be that our world was dragged down almost to the level of a clash between civilizations, cultures and religions? Why are some attempting to thrust the holy religion of Islam into the labyrinth of a limitless clash with the West, a clash that serves no one's interests? To the contrary, it causes everyone grievous harm. Here comes the

question: what can we, the national people of the world, do to get back on course?

In all honesty, I must tell you that this last question is our main concern in the Middle East. Despite the importance of the other questions, and even though we are fully aware of the answers thereto, we prefer to leave aside these questions and to let the historians and scholars probe them, detect any errors and assign historical responsibility to each party.

But in truth the more urgent task is to get back on course by finding a way out of the dark tunnel we have been forced into. In our opinion, the right way to proceed is to go back to where we should have started from in the first place and to address directly and effectively the chronic conflicts, foremost among them being the Arab-Israeli conflict and its core issue, the Palestinian question.

Any attempt to achieve stability and disseminate peace and security in the world without a serious settlement of the Palestinian question and the Arab-Israeli conflict will not be successful. The opposite is also true. Serious and sustained action to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement of that conflict and that question directly serves international peace and security and contributes to the stabilization of the Middle East region. All of us are aware of the importance of Middle East stability for the stability of the world at large. Furthermore, we are duty-bound to continue our work to defuse tensions in Iraq and Lebanon and to stabilize and improve the situation in Darfur.

It is hard to believe that sixteen years have already passed since the convening of the historic Madrid Peace Conference between the Arabs and Israel. Fourteen years have elapsed since the signing of the first Palestinian-Israeli accord in Oslo. Eleven years ago, Arab States adopted peace as their strategic option to end their conflict with Israel. Five full years have passed since the declaration by the Arab States of their historic initiative regarding their readiness to establish normal peace relations with Israel in return for the latter's withdrawal from the territories it occupied by force in 1967 and for the just settlement of the Palestinian question. It has also been five years since the Palestinians and the Israelis reached a number of agreed points and memorandums that come very close to the final settlement of this question.

Given all of the above, one would scarcely believe that peace today still seems farther away than it was in the early 1990s. It is hard to believe that there is now talk going around in vicious circles about the bases and principles of the settlement, which are already known to all of us. It is also hard to believe that strenuous efforts are made to resume negotiations to agree yet again on mechanisms and formulations. Rehashing those old and worn-out subjects is an exercise in futility.

We in Egypt realize that the persistence of this conflict inflames passions and minds in the region. The Assembly knows the efforts and sacrifices made by Egypt in order to put a just and comprehensive end to this historic conflict in a manner that serves the interests of all parties.

But this issue requires leadership; it requires courage from all parties. It also requires a clear and correct vision that the lack of a peaceful settlement of this conflict not only denies the right of a whole people to freedom and dignity, but also feeds directly the calls for violence, extremism and the relinquishing of peaceful and political negotiation as a means to achieve the objective. Thus the conflict will continue to rage for years to come; peoples will continue to suffer; the world will continue to face the current state of sharp instability and polarization, as we are currently witnessing.

Egypt has displayed and continues to display its constant readiness to work with all parties: Palestinians, Israelis, Americans, Europeans and all those who take to heart the interests of the Palestinian people, the interests of the peoples of the region and the interest of world peace and stability. Our purpose is to achieve the resumption of serious political dialogue, which would lead to a settlement within a strict, specified time frame.

We will spare no effort to achieve that objective. We will not despair in the face of problems and difficulties. We will work in all sincerity because we are committed to the cause of our Palestinian brothers and to the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State on the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. We will continue to work because we are committed to the liberation of the rest of the occupied Arab territories in Syria and Lebanon and because we are committed to the objective of achieving just and comprehensive

peace in the Middle East. In this respect, the meeting called for by President Bush this fall may, if well prepared, provide an important opportunity to achieve long-awaited progress.

Brotherly Iraq continues to bleed; thousands of its citizens continue to be killed; thousands more continue to flee as a result of difficult living conditions. The state of today's Iraq breaks the heart of one and all. In spite of the political process in Iraq, which we understood and encouraged, events on the ground, with their extremely negative repercussions, are what shapes today's Iraq and its image before the international community.

Iraq today sorely needs leaders and leaderships that are keen on preserving the unity of this major Arab country. It needs leaders who seek consensus and steer away from sectarianism and confessionalism. It needs leaders who extend the hand of dialogue to each other, who do not point guns at one another: it needs leaders who close ranks to combat the illegal armed factions and militias that take the lives of dozens of Iraqis everyday. It needs leaders who would sit together to agree on the shape and future of the State of Iraq in the Iraqi Constitution, which we believe should express the hopes and dreams of all Iraqis without exclusion or marginalization. It should build a modern developed State that is enriched by its diversity and that does not allocate its posts on the basis of sect or ethnic background in a manner that causes tension and increases discord.

Egypt reiterates the importance of the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq in a manner that enjoys the consensus of all Iraqis. We also reiterate the need for foreign interventions to cease influencing developments in that sisterly country. Egypt reaffirms its full support for any regional or international effort that assists Iraqis to overcome this difficult situation. By the same token, Egypt will continue to consistently call upon Iraqis to show unity and engage in dialogue in order to restore and strengthen trust among them.

Brotherly Lebanon is also going through a sensitive crisis. The prospects for settling that crisis seem remote and difficult in view of internal differences and the regional tug-of-war. The situation in Lebanon is delicate and must not be burdened by the weight of the conflicts raging in the region. Therefore, Egypt has consistently called for Lebanon to be left to its people to determine what they wish for themselves. We continue to encourage Lebanon's politicians to engage in dialogue among themselves. It is our hope that they will be able to deal with the upcoming entitlements, foremost and most important among which are the presidential elections, in a manner consistent with the Lebanese Constitution and that would enable them to preserve Lebanon's constitutional institutions and the proud achievements of its democracy. The Lebanese model of coexistence is significant and should not be allowed to suffer a setback similar to that suffered in the past. Egypt will work with all parties to achieve that objective.

Since the onset of its crisis, the Darfur region of Sudan has witnessed difficult conditions. This has required time, effort and hard work from all of us to defuse that crisis and to reach a settlement that would ensure for the whole population of the region the right to a decent life. Egypt welcomed the broad concern of the international community over those difficult conditions and sought, in cooperation with concerned international and regional parties, to bring the parties in the crisis close to each other.

As concrete proof of its concern for the stabilization of the situation in Darfur, Egypt has offered a generous contribution of nearly 3,500 troops to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in the region. That offer still stands. In addition, Egypt has contributed to the development of the region by drilling 40 boreholes that would make water resources available to larger numbers of people in Darfur.

Egypt profoundly believes in the three main pillars of international disarmament treaties: non-proliferation, disarmament and the inherent right of every State to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In 1995, Egypt accepted the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons within an integrated package that included a resolution calling upon all States of the region without exception, to accede to the Treaty and compelling those States responsible for the maintenance of international security to discharge their responsibilities. However, this objective is still to be achieved because Israel has not yet acceded to the Treaty despite all the international and regional calls on it to do so.

Today's world is regrettably witnessing an imbalance and double standards in dealings with the various parties that have nuclear ambitions, potential or expertise. Egypt believes that the international

disarmament and non-proliferation system will be strengthened and that regional security in the Middle East will be reinforced only when a single standard is applied equally to all the States of the region without exception.

The previous session witnessed many serious efforts and consultations concerning the question of the reform and expansion of the Security Council. Despite the plethora of consultations, meetings and endeavours, this objective remains elusive. As a member of the African Group, Egypt once again states its full commitment to the specifics of the unified African position. It remains a fair and balanced position that would, if implemented, achieve legitimate African aspirations. I cannot fail to refer here to the fact that the reform of the working methods of the Security Council is a genuine objective in itself that must not fade or be obscured by the attempts of some to expand the Council.

We have plenty of work to do, but since time is short I would like to say that the state of our world is no cause for rejoicing. Rather it is a cause for concern. This requires us to work together with open minds in order to change it for the better, and in order to meet the aspirations of our peoples to freedom, justice, a dignified life, security and peace.

During this session, Egypt will raise and defend the priorities and visions I have put forward in this statement along with a host of other subjects that time did not allow me to address. It is our hope that we will all write in responding to the challenges facing us. We all bear responsibility and will all suffer the consequences of failure.

The President: I now give the floor to His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Sheikh Al Nahyan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to express, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, and to your friendly country on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We look forward to working closely with you as you seek to successfully discharge your mission.

I would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her remarkable achievements during her presidency at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, in particular her efforts to stimulate more active debate among cultures.

I also take this opportunity to express our warmest greetings to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General, and to note our appreciation of the initiatives he has taken to promote the role of the United Nations since assuming his post.

Our world still suffers from a wide range of regional and international issues, conflicts and threats, most visible among which are the worldwide spread of poverty and epidemics, the degradation of the environment, terrorism, organized crime, the spread of extremism and violations of human rights, and attempts to obtain nuclear weapons. This should prompt us to make sincere and determined efforts to implement the recommendations, decisions and plans of action approved by the world's leaders and by the United Nations.

Given its interest in and commitment to the principle of good-neighbourly relations, as well as its respect for the national sovereignty of other States, the United Arab Emirates would like to draw attention to the fact that, thus far, no progress whatsoever has been made on the issue of the Iranian occupation since 1971 of three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates: the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. This is despite the consistent efforts expended and the positive peaceful initiatives taken by my country, which wants this issue settled by peaceful means, either through bilateral and unconditioned negotiations or by referral of the issue to the International Court of Justice for legal arbitration.

Severe conflict has sorely wounded our region, and quick and effective treatment is required. As for Iraq, we express our firm belief that all should abstain from interference in Iraq's internal affairs and should show respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. This requires that all parties should cooperate to bring to an end the cycle of violence and the inflaming of passions, and it calls for partition and division. Let us give our support to an Iraqi Government that truly works to achieve national reconciliation. The United Arab Emirates renews its encouragement for the efforts made to promote reconstruction in Iraq.

Regarding the Middle East crisis, we call on the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, to play a more active role, together with the Middle East Quartet, to give new momentum to the Middle East peace process. We stress that no solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is possible without Israel's acceptance of the Arab Peace Initiative, which is based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and offers a balanced and comprehensive solution to this long-standing conflict.

In this context, we are following with interest the efforts to convene the international peace conference for the Middle East later this year with the participation of all concerned parties. We look forward to a balanced and fair settlement of the issue on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, the United Nations Security Council resolutions, and the rules of international legitimacy. We also renew our support for Syria's right to regain its full sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights.

We note with satisfaction the United Nations role in restoring security and stability in Lebanon, thanks to the pressure put on Israel to fulfil its legal obligations under Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), including respect for Lebanon's sovereignty, withdrawal from the Shaba'a farmlands and the village of al-Ghajar and the handing over of detailed maps and coordinates of the landmines that Israel planted in southern Lebanon.

We reaffirm our support for the reconstruction efforts and for the stability and territorial integrity of Lebanon as well as for the maintenance of its constitutional institutions. In this respect, the United Arab Emirates has undertaken a number of reconstruction projects in Lebanon and has provided humanitarian assistance. The United Arab Emirates collaborates closely with the Lebanese Government and the United Nations to remove mines and unexploded ordnance, this work having originally commenced as part of an initiative taken by the United Arab Emirates in 2001, when my Government provided initial funding of $50 million.

We hope that talks between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency will eventually lead to a permanent, peaceful solution that will spare the region further tensions and conflicts and will help to reassure countries in the region that they will not be faced with any threats to their security. We stress again that Israel should not be excluded from the terms of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The United Arab Emirates continues to cooperate fully with all efforts to combat all forms of terrorism, including associated money-laundering. We also emphasize the importance of promoting dialogue among cultures and civilizations and of enhancing tolerance among religions.

The United Arab Emirates contributes generously to the financing of development projects in some 95 States. Such assistance has exceeded $70 billion and is intended to promote a culture of peace and stability in those countries and throughout the world. Consistent with that approach, the United Arab Emirates has created a number of institutions, including the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, the Zayed Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, the Khalifa bin Zayed Foundation for Charitable Work and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Charity, which recently launched the "Dubai Cares" charity campaign, which seeks to guarantee education for 1 million children around the world, especially in Asia and Africa.

Since its creation in 1971, the United Arab Emirates has achieved economic, social and cultural progress that has helped to establish stability and well-being for citizens of the Emirates and job opportunities for the millions who work in our country.

We have also launched an interim political reform plan, in whose first phase half of the members of the Federal National Council were elected as an important step towards political participation. In this context, I should also like to make reference to the significant national gains that have been made by women in the United Arab Emirates. Two women sit in the Council of Ministers, and women hold approximately a quarter of the seats in the Federal National Council. They are also represented in the judiciary and in other senior leadership and decision-making positions.

In the context of its national, regional and international efforts and cooperation, the United Arab Emirates has enacted laws to counter terrorist crimes and money-laundering and has frozen many suspect bank and corporate accounts. It has also enacted laws on issues such as human trafficking and international judicial cooperation on criminal matters, and has adopted import and export control procedures for a range of commodities.

In its desire for educational and cultural contact with the rest of the world, the United Arab Emirates has launched a number of initiatives, including the $2-million Sheikh Zayed Book Award, designed to motivate creative writers and intellectuals to make contributions in all spheres of the humanities.

As part of our efforts to bring the experience of the world's most prestigious universities to the United Arab Emirates, we have recently launched the Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi and have inaugurated the Emirates Foundation to raise our educational, technological, intellectual and research resources to the highest global levels. Further underlining our belief in the importance of cultural communication among the world's peoples for the preservation of the historical heritage of human civilization, we have agreed to build two world-class satellite museums in the United Arab Emirates: the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi.

The United Arab Emirates prides itself on being home for people of all religions, ethnicities, cultures and countries from all continents. Indeed, the number of countries represented in the Emirates exceeds the total membership of the United Nations. All these people live in the Emirates in harmony, forming a model for what the modern world should be like.

In compliance with its obligations under international human rights and labour treaties, the United Arab Emirates has enacted legislation to guarantee the full rights of its expatriate workforce in accordance with relevant national and international laws and treaties. I affirm here that the relevant authorities in the United Arab Emirates are determined that these laws and treaties should be fully implemented so as to protect workers and provide them with the best working and living conditions.

Finally, we hope that our deliberations on the urgent international issues on the agenda of the current sixty-second session of the General Assembly will continue in a spirit of solidarity and will lead to positive steps towards the eventual fulfilment of our aspiration to peace, development and prosperity for our world and its peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ursula Plassnik, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria.

Ms. Plassnik (Austria): Let me address at the outset a burning issue: the situation in Myanmar/Burma. We join the call of many, including our partners in the European Union and in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, for an immediate cessation of violence. The bloodshed has to stop. Democratic rights and the freedom of assembly and expression have to be respected. We reiterate the call for the release from detention of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the Burmese democratic opposition. That appeal was also made at this morning's meeting of the Women's Empowerment Network, which unites women leaders from around the globe.

We can all feel a sense of urgency at this sixty-second General Assembly session about the need to counter contemporary challenges with decisive joint action. Climate change, disarmament and dangerous technologies are just three examples requiring such joint action, now.

Let me thus call for relaunching effective multilateralism. And let me make the case for a new global partnership — the joint search for sustainable joint solutions, united by a shared sense of responsibility and purpose. The very concept of partnership is key in addressing the new challenges, both inside our societies and in the global village. Partnership is an eye-to-eye approach, based on recognizing and respecting each other as equals. Partnership is also a demanding option: anyone who wants to be treated as a partner has to behave as a partner.

We all know that none of us, not even the strongest, can master the challenges of the twenty-first century on his or her own. In the age of globalization, unilateralism and nationalism are dead-end streets. They simply do not achieve effective and durable results. We thus need both global processes and global objectives. We need to actively engage to build confidence and to counter the erosion of trust that so often breeds unilateral action.

Climate change is the obvious challenge to be addressed in such a new global partnership. The United Nations is the only framework in which a fair and truly global agreement can be designed. Regional and sectoral efforts need to be linked, feeding into this global process. Furthermore, it is here only that those who contribute least to climate change but are most

affected by it — such as the small island developing States — can make their voices heard.

Disarmament, arms control and conflict prevention are next in need of a credible relaunch of multilateralism and a new partnership. In the nuclear age, we simply cannot afford to acquiesce to the present level of armament and to signs of a new arms race. Non-proliferation and an actual reduction of weapons stockpiles thus have to make an immediate comeback to the top of the global agenda.

On certain limited issues, multilateral progress is within reach. A consistently growing number of States is rallying behind our call for the adoption by 2008 of a legally binding instrument to prohibit cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians. Austria is determined to continue leading this process by example, with a total national ban of this atrocious weapon.

Nuclear technology is a third field for a new global partnership. The world is turning nuclear, whether we like it or not. This in itself is regrettable for countries like Austria which have renounced nuclear energy altogether because we believe it is a dangerous and non-sustainable source of energy. Inevitably, the rise of nuclear power across the globe will lead to more and more tensions with regard to the nature — whether for energy purposes or for weapons development — of national nuclear programmes. There is a highly dangerous grey zone between what is permitted and what is possible.

A new global partnership where sensitive parts of the nuclear fuel cycle are multilateralized could offer a way out. We should create a regime in which enrichment facilities would be placed under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The Agency would guarantee adequate fuel supply to those who fulfil strict non-proliferation criteria through an international nuclear fuel bank. This would help to dissuade tensions and make new national enrichment facilities superfluous.

At present, the Iranian nuclear programme — for many reasons — is deeply upsetting for the entire international community, not just for some of us. Iran should take these concerns very seriously. It is clearly up to Iran to dispel any shadow of doubt over the nature of its programme by providing undisputable proof to the world's nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, now. Like many others, we strongly support Director General ElBaradei's appeal for a double time-out and urge Iran to heed this call.

Our engagement for peace and security is rooted in the firm belief that right must prevail over might. Smaller and medium-sized Member States like Austria understandably have a profound attachment to the rule of law. For us, respect for the rule of law is a matter not of choice but of necessity. Together with many other like-minded countries, we will continue promoting the rule of law and will give strong support to the newly established Rule of Law Assistance Unit.

Austria believes in the power of partnership, where equality, mutual trust and respect for diversity overcome the crude logic of power. From our experience, effective global partnership best builds on both regional partnerships and regional ownership. Austria is thus committed to developing a new relationship among equals between the European Union and the African Union, at the forthcoming European Union-Africa summit in Lisbon.

To this end, Burkina Faso and Austria will co-host a conference in Ouagadougou in November on how to create sustainable peace. The meeting will unite participants from countries of the Economic Community of West African States and Europe in an endeavour to provide a common input to the Lisbon summit — by furthering policies of good-neighbourliness, the rule of law and good governance; by fighting the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; by creating employment for young people; and by actively promoting the education of girls.

Together with the United Nations, the African Union is currently breaking new ground with the preparations for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. The human suffering we witness in the region sometimes goes beyond imagination. We therefore welcome the ongoing efforts to alleviate this plight, including in neighbouring States.

We Europeans cannot credibly call upon other regions of the world to assume their regional responsibilities if we remain unable to cope with the challenges on our own continent, and in particular the Kosovo issue. We need to resolve the last open status issue in the Western Balkans now. We therefore fully support the ongoing efforts of the Kosovo Troika and encourage Belgrade and Pristina to energetically make use of that negotiating space. The Special Envoy of the

Secretary-General, President Ahtisaari, has provided us with a clear sense of direction. We Europeans want each and every person in Kosovo to live in dignity, freedom and security. The international organizations concerned, including the European Union, must spare no effort towards that end. It is also our continued obligation under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), which referred to the specific contribution the European Union can make to the stability of Kosovo as well as the entire Balkan region.

Women around the world are ready to bear a key responsibility in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. But women also need to be given a fair share of positions in international mediation and peacebuilding efforts. Not so long ago, there was not a single woman among the 54 United Nations Special Representatives and Envoys to conflict and post-conflict regions. I am encouraged by the Secretary-General's support on this matter and the recent nomination of three women Deputy Special Representatives: for Liberia, the Sudan and Lebanon. It is also up to us, the Member States, to nominate more women for such positions.

No conflict is too complex or too deep to durably resist dialogue. The absence of dialogue breeds misperceptions and sometimes even opens space for violence. Austria has long-standing experience in promoting dialogue among civilizations, religions and cultures, and we will continue our activities in that field with vigour. We must actively combat attempts to hijack religion for other purposes anywhere in our global village. Religious leaders must also take a clear stance in condemning and fighting practices not related to religion, such as so-called honour killings or female genital mutilation.

Austria firmly supports the current bilateral and international efforts that are taking place to renew the dialogue between Israel and its Arab neighbours. We hope that the meetings between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas will create the basis for implementing the two-State solution: Israel and a Palestinian State living as neighbours in peace and security.

We appreciate the efforts by the United States for an international meeting later this year to assist the parties in their quest for a just solution. We expect that meeting to advance the peace process substantially and sustainably by addressing the core issues, and we stand ready to assist in preparatory and follow-up activities. The people of the entire Middle East region are thirsty for a new perspective of hope.

In 2008 we will celebrate a landmark in the promotion and protection of human rights: the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its immutable foundation, the universality of fundamental rights. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. It is therefore not acceptable that human rights be revitalized or diminished in relation to geography or other factors. There is no doubt that women must enjoy the same universal rights, wherever they live and whatever their culture, creed or religion.

Our peoples expect from their leadership nothing less than a life in dignity, but above all a life in freedom from fear and in freedom from want. If we are truly committed to human security, it is essential that we make every effort to meet the Millennium Development Goals by determined, concerted action to eradicate poverty and hunger, to promote equality between men and women and to protect our planet's resources. The Austrian Government has made it an explicit priority to actively live up to the rising challenges.

Based on our long-standing engagement for the principles and values of the United Nations, I pledge that Austria will be a responsible and reliable partner as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the term 2009-2010. We hope that the Members of the United Nations will entrust Austria with that responsibility, which we stand ready to shoulder in a spirit of true partnership.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivailo Kalfin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Kalfin (Bulgaria): It is a privilege and an honour for me to address this audience and to represent Bulgaria in its new status as a State member of the European Union. Having subscribed to the statement made by the Prime Minister of Portugal (see A/62/PV.4), I would like to assure the Assembly that, as part of the European family, my country is now even more committed to the universal and normative role of the United Nations in today's globalized world.

I warmly congratulate you, Mr. Srgjan Kerim, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We are delighted to see in the leadership of this body an outstanding representative of a neighbouring State and of our region, South-Eastern Europe. I reiterate that my country fully supports the priorities you have outlined for the work of this session. We wish you every success in the months ahead.

Our gratitude goes to Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her leadership as President of the sixty-first session. I also take this opportunity to commend the dedicated and energetic performance of the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, during his first nine months in office.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to thank the President for having chosen climate change as a central theme for our debate. That world challenge calls upon all of us to provide an immediate response based on shared but differentiated responsibilities of Member countries. We welcome the fact that the high-level event on climate change held on 24 September has given considerable impetus to future negotiations on a new international agreement, which will benefit broadly from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

Global warming is exacerbating the serious economic and social problems that developing countries are facing. It also threatens the implementation of development goals set by the international community, including the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, we join other countries in supporting the recent United Kingdom initiative calling for urgent action to meet those goals. Bulgaria is prepared to play its part in solidarity with developing countries.

Unfortunately, the list of serious threats to our common security is not short. Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control and disarmament continue to be at the forefront of the international scene. Strengthening the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to make it truly universal remains one of the major priorities of our time. It is regrettable that no progress has been achieved on the pending question regarding Iran's nuclear programme.

Bulgaria reaffirms its support for the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms. We are firmly committed to the process towards adoption of an international treaty on the arms trade in the near future.

My country unambiguously condemns terrorism and rejects terrorist ideology in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism cannot be linked to any specific culture or religion. The United Nations must continue to play a central role in mobilizing the international community to meet this challenge and to meet the related challenge of radicalism and political extremism.

In order to combat terrorism, we must first address the fundamental problems of poverty and underdevelopment, overcome prejudices and stereotypes and promote tolerance in a world of great diversity. That is why Bulgaria has joined the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations, fully supporting other complementary initiatives as well.

The situation in Iraq continues to be a source of concern for the international community. This calls for the commitment of the United Nations. Bulgaria is participating in joint efforts to ensure that Iraq will be able to achieve its vision of a safe, unified and democratic State.

Afghanistan is another example where a powerful need has been felt to see increased involvement of the United Nations, along with NATO and the European Union, to support the difficult national reconstruction process.

Progress towards peace in the Middle East is of primary importance for the international community. Bulgaria welcomes the resumption of bilateral talks between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert and hopes that they will lead to a just and lasting solution in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the Quartet principles. Lebanon too continues to require a strong commitment on our part to secure its national unity, territorial integrity, recovery and reconstruction.

Today, the role of the United Nations is no longer solely to maintain peace, but to ensure that peace is firmly rooted and sustainable. The Peacebuilding Commission is now up and running. We believe that it has great potential, and its position vis-à-vis the principal organs of the United Nations must be strengthened and better defined. We see the future of

the Commission as a modern multilateral instrument for the long-term resolution of conflicts.

The institution-building process in the Human Rights Council has led to a compromise. We believe that this has led to opportunities for us to make the Council an effective international tool to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Bulgaria fully shares the view that human life has supreme value and invites Member States to support a draft resolution on a moratorium on and abolition of the death penalty.

For multilateralism to be effective, it must involve strong partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. We heartily endorse the growing interaction between the United Nations and the European Union. The recently updated Joint Declaration on United Nations-European Union Cooperation in Crisis Management has provided a new avenue for joint action. In addition, the United Nations and the African Union are involved in an unprecedented peace operation, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, for remedying the critical situation in Darfur. We also welcome the pragmatic cooperation established between the United Nations and NATO.

Various forms of regional and subregional cooperation have always been the cornerstone of a global system of collective security. Bulgaria is now chairing two regional organizations: the Central European Initiative and the South-East European Cooperation Process. Regional cooperation in South-East Europe has grown stronger and is gaining momentum. The Stability Pact, which was launched at the initiative of the European Union in 1999, has provided important impetus. In accordance with the concept of regional ownership, the key role today has been assumed by the South-East European Cooperation Process. Agreement on the creation of a regional cooperation council secretariat has just been signed by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member countries in the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv.

Bulgaria is now leading this process and will spare no effort to strengthen the prospects for European integration for the entire South-East European region. Our priorities focus on cooperation in sectors such as infrastructure, security, energy, the environment, tourism, justice and domestic affairs.

The unresolved status of Kosovo has a negative effect on security in the entire region. We regret that the Security Council has not been able to adopt a new resolution to replace resolution 1244 (1999) and thus to confirm its backing for a negotiated solution on the basis of the proposal of Special Envoy Ahtisaari. Bulgaria steadily supports all efforts aimed at reaching, as quickly as possible, a viable and legitimate solution with respect to the status of Kosovo. Such a settlement would guarantee regional peace and stability; it should take into account the interests and the concerns of neighbouring countries.

Thanks to the efforts deployed by the Contact Group Troika, we now have perhaps the final chance to find a negotiated solution. We hope that Belgrade and Pristina will be able to take this opportunity to find a compromise that can open the path to a new European future. While these talks are under way, it is essential to prevent any worsening of the situation. The international community — first and foremost the United Nations, NATO, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — are working together with local institutions, and they must continue to provide the necessary instruments and the guarantees to preserve regional stability.

Promoting democratization, stability, security and cooperation is a major challenge in the Black Sea region. Consistent efforts are required so that we can arrive at a settlement of the of the frozen conflicts in Transdniestria and in the southern Caucasus, which continue to undermine stability and hamper regional cooperation.

Bulgaria actively supports the formulation and implementation of the Black Sea dimension in the policy of good-neighbourliness with the European Union. Major projects have been started in important sectors such as transportation, energy, trade, environment and border security. Stability and predictability in this region are more important than ever to ensure energy security in Europe and to ensure the diversification and reliability of energy supplies to the continent.

Bulgaria is firmly convinced that in order for the United Nations to play its role effectively worldwide, it must steadfastly pursue the radical reforms identified at the 2005 World Summit. Progress was achieved at the sixty-first session, but much remains to be done so

that the reforms meet the international community's hopes.

Despite the good-faith efforts of the mediators, no tangible progress has been seen on a question that has been discussed at length: reform of the Security Council. My delegation supports the recommendation to move this process forward to the negotiation phase, with a view to reaching a broadly acceptable compromise that would take account of equitable geographic representation. It is obvious that reform of the Council will not be an easy task. We will require interim solutions at various stages over a certain period of time. The first step, however, cannot be put off indefinitely, because if we are unable to reform the Security Council, then broad reform of the United Nations will be incomplete.

A critical consideration of the implementation of a number of pilot countries in the One United Nations Initiative has revealed positive results. But consensus has yet to emerge on how to further the process of attaining system-wide coherence in the work of the United Nations. We hope that the final outcome will take the form of improved and increased development assistance, which would go together with a United Nations synergy in the concerned countries and the competent structures.

(*spoke in English*)

In conclusion, we should recognize that progress has been made in a number of reform areas. But we have not yet achieved enough. Bulgaria expects that the remaining tasks on the United Nations reform agenda will be pursued energetically and without delay. To that end we appeal to Member States to show more flexibility on the decisions needed to ensure the consistency of the reform process. It is in our common interest to ensure that the sixty-second session is a success. So let us work together and with goodwill to make it happen.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, upon your election as President of the Assembly at this session. There is no doubt that your expertise and your knowledge of international affairs will ensure anther successful session this year and will contribute to fulfilling the aspirations of our peoples for the United Nations.

I take this opportunity to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to our dear sister, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, and to commend her for the way in which she so ably and wisely guided the work of the Assembly. As a result, serious ideas were put forward that yielded tangible results for the development of the Organization and the revitalization of its role. In that respect, we want to express our appreciation to all delegations that displayed a spirit of cooperation with her during her presidency.

I have the pleasure also to thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his ongoing efforts to strengthen and develop the role of the United Nations. We are confident that the Secretary-General's long experience as an able diplomat will enable him to undertake further efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of our international Organization.

In our joint endeavours to achieve world peace, prosperity and justice, we must address the challenges and dangers confronting our world today from a standpoint of faith in our one human destiny. We should realize that international security is based on joint efforts to guarantee regional security and the stability of States. At the same time, international peace requires respect for international legitimacy, the rule of law and justice. Since comprehensive development is a national and international requirement, it is important that we collectively and seriously face threats regardless of their forms or manifestations, such as conflict, war, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, environment disaster, poverty, backwardness and extremism, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly, including the United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2).

The resolution containing the Millennium Declaration was a unique and pioneering endeavour which embodied a consensus among the world leaders who set out the goals we must reach in this new millennium. In this respect, the Kingdom of Bahrain is proud, by the grace of God, to have witnessed comprehensive political developments in its

democratic march forward, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of Bahrain, where free and fair elections were held with broad participation.

Meanwhile, its comprehensive development efforts were crowned by the United Nations presenting the 2006 Special Citation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Scroll of Honour Award to His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain. This reflected international appreciation for the developments that continue to be witnessed by the Kingdom, especially in the field of urban development.

Social and economic achievements, under the patronage also of His Highness Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince and Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defence Force, have continued unabated. They are based on strategies and policies designed to ensure the welfare of all citizens by encouraging investment, strengthening the national human rights machinery, reforming the labour market and developing the education sector.

In the decades since the establishment of the United Nations, our world has witnessed both unipolar and bipolar world orders. Worldwide events and the ensuing results proved that such orders were not enough to guarantee security, peace, stability and prosperity in the world. Therefore, the time is now right to enable everybody to participate effectively in a universal system based on a just multilateralism that guarantees collective work towards achieving common goals.

We, as the United Nations, pledged in the Charter, in the name of our peoples to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights. That calls upon the international community promptly and effectively to address threats to international peace and security. At the forefront of those threats are the ongoing regional issues that the Middle East faces on various fronts, the most important of which is the situation in the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories.

In this respect, we welcome the initiative of President George Bush of the United States to convene an international conference on Middle East peace this year. We hope that this will mark the beginning of a new stage in dealing with the core issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict in a just and equitable manner, putting an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people and to the occupation since 1967 of the Palestinian territories, the Syrian Golan and other occupied Arab territories in sisterly Lebanon. It should also lead to the establishment of an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital. Such a State should also be able to engage in development and to live in peace and stability with all States in the region, including Israel, in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, United Nations resolutions and other relevant international agreements and terms of reference.

The second front is represented by the events in brotherly Iraq, whose people suffer from continued insecurity and instability as a result of the ceaseless waves of violence and the killing of innocent people. It is our view that the responsibility for breaking out of this vicious circle and achieving national reconciliation and stability lies primarily with the Iraqi people and their political leadership. To enable Iraq to do that, there must be no interference in Iraq's internal affairs, and its borders must be fully respected. We stress here how important it is for neighbouring States, the Arab League and the United Nations to continue to support the legitimate Iraqi Government and its efforts to maintain security and stability in Iraq and to preserve its Arab and Islamic identity.

It seems clear that the attainment of stability in Lebanon is closely bound to free national reconciliation, and to strengthened national, Arab and international efforts and support for Lebanon's legitimacy, with a view to preserving its security, safety and stability. Lebanon is an integral part of the system of regional peace and security in the Middle East and as such should be supported. We express our regret at the assassinations of many politicians, officials and innocent people in Lebanon. We hope that Lebanon will overcome the current crisis so that its people can live in security and peace.

The stability and unity of the Sudan are fundamental pillars of the political, economic and social unity of Africa. We commend the decision of the brotherly Sudan to agree to the deployment of a United Nations-African Union hybrid force in Darfur. In that context, we hope that the parties to the conflict in the Sudan will come together for the sake of their country and its prosperity.

The Kingdom of Bahrain recently joined the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), because of its belief in the Agency's important role in strengthening nuclear non-proliferation. In order to avoid a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, the Kingdom of Bahrain underlines the importance of freeing the region from nuclear weapons. It therefore urges the parties concerned, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to be more transparent and to cooperate fully with the terms of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) so as to build tranquillity and peace of mind among neighbouring States in the Gulf. The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the right of all States to utilize nuclear power for peaceful purposes. It also demands that Israel place all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA and become a party to the NPT in order to promote the Treaty's universality.

In order to promote friendly relations and cooperation between members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the right of the brotherly United Arab Emirates to recover its three occupied islands. It hopes that the two countries will increase their efforts and their contacts to resolve this issue either through direct negotiation or by referring it to the International Court of Justice.

Global climate change has become one of the most dangerous challenges threatening the world and its inhabitants. Climate change not only has an impact on the environment, but also severely affects the world's economic and social order and hinders development. We therefore call upon all States to cooperate in order to identify solutions and ways to deal with this phenomenon. Here I wish to commend the high-level event on climate change, convened by the Secretary-General on 24 September 2007 in New York, on the theme "The future in our hands: Addressing the leadership challenge of climate change".

Our faith in a single human destiny requires us to consolidate a culture of peace, brotherhood and dialogue among all nations and peoples and to abandon phenomena of hatred, discrimination and division — including what has been dubbed Islamophobia — which some are promoting to incite upheaval and hatred between peoples in order to serve their own narrow political agendas and interests. Those individuals forget that Islam is a monotheistic religion and that it stresses brotherhood, love, coexistence and tolerance. We hope in this context that the High-level Dialogue to be held by the General Assembly on 4 and 5 October will contribute to reinforcing the values of tolerance, understanding and respect for religions and cultures.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms the importance of joint efforts towards a new international environment, in which we can achieve our hope and aspiration to live in peace, security and stability in a world in which mankind will also live in respect, dignity and humanity; a world in which nations will achieve development and build prosperity and well-being; a world that will accept the cultures of others in peaceful coexistence, free from hatred and intolerance; and a world that believes in the unity of human destiny and will work to attain security, prosperity, justice and peace for humankind.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Yeo (Singapore): The item at the top of our agenda is climate change. The upcoming Bali Conference needs our full support. Climate change is a challenge that can only be overcome by our collective efforts. If we fail, the future will be troubled. Small island countries like Singapore will be in great danger. People living in the lowlands will have to move to higher ground. The pressure of migration into spaces which become more habitable because of global warming may well become unstoppable. There will be new conflicts in the world.

We are coming now to understand better the role of climate change in the conflict in Darfur. It does not excuse the heinous crimes that have been committed there, but understanding the water situation in that region will help us find more durable solutions for the future. Many historians are now reassessing the role of climate change in major political events in the past.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We cannot be sure whether our best efforts can stop global warming. The Earth's climate has always gone through cycles. But, even if all we can do is to slow down the process that will buy us time: time to accumulate knowledge, to develop new technologies

and to adapt. For example, the cost of recycling or desalinating water has been steadily coming down and is becoming completely affordable for us in Singapore. Improvements in water technology can defuse political tensions in many parts of the world.

Many problems we face can only be overcome by the nations of the world acting together. Climate change is one. Another is the danger of global pandemics, which must also be kept high on our agenda. The late Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Lee Jong-wook, once said that a new global pandemic was not a question of "whether" but of "when". With the mass movement of human beings, much of it at jet speed, a new bug can spread quickly.

Only a few years ago, we had the scare of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. We are still not sure why that epidemic burned out so quickly, but luckily it did. During the few months it hit us in Singapore, our economy was severely affected. Our tourism industry was devastated. As our economy is so dependent on external trade, shutting our airport was not an option. Instead, we hurriedly converted military night-vision devices into thermal scanners and used them at the airport so that arriving and departing passengers with fever could be pulled aside for medical examination. We knew we could not overcome this problem on our own. The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) convened an emergency meeting to which the Premier of China, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong and the Director-General of WHO were also invited.

Whether it is climate change, global pandemics, the fight against terrorism, the multilateral trading system or international finance, we need better global governance. During the cold war, the world was divided into two camps with each super-Power taking the lead in its own sphere. That era is now behind us. A multipolar world is crystallizing. On no major issue can one country, however powerful, now act on its own, completely disregarding the views of others. The situation in Iraq is a sad example of that. Russia, China, India and Brazil are emergent or re-emergent Powers whose interests must increasingly be factored in. Smaller countries too have become more assertive, refusing to let bigger countries ride roughshod over them.

When major international institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were established many years ago, after the end of the Second World War, the world was very different from what it is today. Because of this, those institutions are not as effective as they ought to be. However, we have to work with those institutions as they are and not as we would want them to be if they were to be newly established today. Unless there is another global conflagration, the improvement of global governance can only be achieved through gradual evolution, not revolution.

We can do that at two levels: at the level of the major Powers and at the level of small and medium-sized countries. At the level of the major Powers, international institutions should increasingly reflect the multipolar reality. For example, the reform of the United Nations, including the reform of the Security Council, should take into account the weight of India, Japan, Germany and Brazil and the growing importance of regional organizations. Selection of heads of the IMF and the World Bank should be widened. Membership of the Group of Eight (G-8) should be enlarged to include countries such as China and India. It is also important that international organizations be held to the highest standards of management. We must maintain their moral authority in the eyes of the world if they are to stay effective. That Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's recent visit to a refugee camp in Darfur received so much applause was because of the prestige of the United Nations and the hope reposed in the Blue Helmets.

On climate change, it is good that the United States has convened a meeting in Washington of the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases. As the world's biggest economy, the United States has to exercise leadership. But it cannot do it on its own. Without major emitters achieving a certain common understanding among themselves, we will not make much progress at the coming Climate Change Conference in Bali.

The involvement of small and medium-sized countries in international institutions has to be enhanced. It is unhealthy if the only way small and medium-sized countries can ensure their interests are taken into account is by threatening to block the progress of others. Indeed, if every country in international organizations had the power of veto the result would be paralysis. As a small country itself,

Singapore takes the view that small and medium-sized countries have both rights and responsibilities. We too must have a sense of responsibility for the global system. A rules-based world gives us more freedom than one where "might is right".

Regional groupings can help small and medium-sized countries strike this balance between rights and responsibilities. The African Union offers a good example of how the discipline of a group gives each of its members a greater say in world affairs than it could have on its own. Group solidarity enables regional organizations such as ASEAN to play a bigger role in the world. ASEAN will soon be strengthened by the leaders' adoption of a formal charter next month.

Both formal and informal arrangements have their uses. For example, the Forum of Small States is a loose coalition of 100 countries that meet regularly to exchange views and to give support to one another. They make up more than half the Members of the United Nations. Formal and informal groups can play a constructive role by taking the middle ground and moderating the excessive demands of radical members. Let us, through the groupings to which we belong, encourage each other towards compromise on the various issues. An example is the Doha Development Agenda. The positions are not so far apart now and it would be a great pity to walk away from a Doha deal because of relatively small differences when the deal could add hundreds of billions of dollars to global welfare.

However effective they are, international institutions cannot stop the natural rivalry among nation States. The major Powers will still throw their weight around, but rules can be established for civilized behaviour and to prevent countries from taking extreme actions that will endanger the planet we share and our common heritage.

We are not a union of nations, but we are at the very least a confederation of nations. There are limits to the sovereignty we exercise as independent nation-States. For example, the countries of the world have not only a legitimate right but also a responsibility to decry the brutal suppression of demonstrators in Myanmar. Yesterday the Foreign Ministers of ASEAN expressed our revulsion through a Chairman's statement which also called on the Myanmar Government to abandon its old ways and take a fresh approach towards national reconciliation with all groups in the country. We applauded the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General to dispatch Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari to Myanmar and urged the Myanmar Government to work with him for the good of the people of the country.

Six months before 11 September 2001, the people of the world watched with shock and horror the deliberate destruction of the ancient Buddha statues in Bamiyan by the Taliban. We must never allow such wanton acts to take place again, whether the injury is to world heritage sites, to the environment or to human beings.

Behind such acts is an attitude of hatred and intolerance that must never be condoned. If this century is to be one of peace and development, all of us must internalize a spirit of interfaith understanding and common humanity. Recently, the Indian Government announced its intention to revive the ancient Buddhist university at Nalanda and offered it to Asian countries as a project to promote cultural and religious understanding and exchange. For hundreds of years Nalanda was a great university drawing students from all over Asia to study not just Buddhism but also philosophy, science, mathematics and other subjects. That project deserves our support.

We need many such endeavours in the world today so as to create a greater awareness of our common origins, our growing interdependence and our common future. Without that larger sense, the challenge of global governance will be difficult to overcome. Without all countries feeling a sense of shared responsibility for the Earth's environment, for example, climate change will become much worse before effective measures are taken, by which time it may be too late for many of us.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergei Martynov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): All of us seated in this Hall witnessed the collapse almost two decades ago of a seemingly invincible international system based on the antagonism of two poles of power. It collapsed instantly. The system that ensued, based on the antagonism of one powerful pole to the rest of the world, is already splitting apart before our very eyes and creating strains that will inevitably lead to its collapse. Simple logic, which does not aspire to explain the laws of the universe, tells us that systems

based on confrontation are short-lived. They are doomed. But this is not the end of history: this is a process of history. As the twenty-first century begins, systems based on antagonism and confrontation are becoming a thing of the past. The sands of time are inexorably flowing out of them. New international systems based on partnership must replace them.

Those thoughts are not a digression into the abstract. Though still split by the old paradigm of North-South confrontation and the imposed myth of confrontation between developed and developing States, and the myth of a clash of civilizations, the international community should through its actions today build a practical partnership that will lay the foundations of new systems for the world order. When we succeed in working together, we will be able to tackle the most serious problems.

Let us take the subject of terrorism. Force alone, even the most powerful and the most sophisticated, cannot overcome terrorism. Its use instead causes a further spiral of terror. We have all painfully come to realize this. Instead, we have understood the true impact of poverty, inequality, social vulnerability and illiteracy on the rise of extremism and terrorism and have taken up the fight against terrorism through joint and comprehensive efforts, and have thus started to undermine the very foundations of terrorism. The decisive role in this, in our opinion, belongs to the United Nations.

The United Nations must also reassert its leading role in the fight against such growing evils as trafficking in human beings and bring about cooperation between the countries of origin and countries of destination of modern-day slaves. Having, in 2006, taken the first steps towards coordinating the efforts of the international community in this sphere (see resolution 61/180), the General Assembly should offer to its intergovernmental and non-governmental partners a practical vision of a global partnership in this fight. As an optimal form of such a partnership, Belarus would opt for a United Nations plan of action or strategy to counter human trafficking and other modern forms of slavery. Let us determine the optimal format for our cooperation through a thematic General Assembly debate and begin this without delay during the current session.

We are certain that it is time for our common Organization, the United Nations, to begin looking for ways, obviously based on cooperation, to deal with what is de facto the most topical problem facing humankind: the energy problem. Antagonism between suppliers and consumers of energy resources and a price race will not resolve the energy problem. Such antagonism is itself a superficial phenomenon. At the end of the day, we are all energy consumers, and this, in principle, is where we have common interests. How are we to solve this problem, given the rapid pace of growth of the world economy and the consequent rush for energy sources? It is clear that the future belongs to alternative and renewable sources of energy. This means that today the United Nations must work out practical arrangements for the transfer and distribution of alternative and renewable energy technologies on a global scale. That is a fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Such practical measures should include the methods of dealing with the obvious problem that these technologies are concentrated in the hands of a small group of States. Otherwise, the pricing for these technologies tomorrow will emulate today's exorbitant prices for traditional energy resources. If a few decades ago the international community drew on the enlightened minds of researchers and managed to decide that a future controlled fusion technology, as a perpetual source of energy, should belong to all humanity, why can the United Nations today not take a similar decision with respect to alternative and renewable sources of energy? It would probably be right to hold, during the next session of the General Assembly, informal thematic debates on technologies for alternative and renewable energy resources as the common property of humankind.

The problem of global climate change — a key topic for this year's general debate — is becoming increasingly acute. At present, the Kyoto Protocol is the most important international instrument for addressing this issue. In 2006, with an eye to full-fledged participation in the Kyoto Protocol, Belarus became the first and so far the only country to initiate an amendment to annex-B of the Protocol. In view of the worsening problem of climate change and incorporating the wishes of our partners, we have undertaken the most stringent commitments on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region. Through joint efforts by the parties to the Kyoto Protocol, let us ensure prompt ratification of the

amendment and its entry into force, thereby setting a major practical precedent by enlarging the circle of participants in the Kyoto Protocol.

The fact that Belarus takes climate change and environmental protection issues so seriously is not accidental. Like our neighbours, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, for the past two decades now Belarus has had to deal with the consequences of the deadliest man-made disaster of the twentieth century, the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Thanks to great effort and at tremendous cost the most urgent problems of providing emergency assistance to the population today have been dealt with. In the years to come we will face an equally challenging task, namely, to restore the economic potential of the affected areas and to create a viable environment for people and pollution-free production. As before, we will bear the main burden ourselves. However, we hope that the proposed proclamation by the United Nations of a decade of rehabilitation and sustainable development of Chernobyl-affected areas, which was endorsed by the 2006 Minsk Chernobyl International Conference, will have the support of the Assembly and that a new resolution of the General Assembly will officially announce the beginning of the decade of Chernobyl, thus ensuring the cooperation and solidarity of the international community.

From this rostrum much has been said about the problems of the Doha round of negotiations on international trade. There is one more aspect of this subject, the unacceptable practice of certain countries that use the process of accession to membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as a convenient instrument of pressure on candidate countries. This has involved not only economic pressure, in order to receive coerced and unilateral additional benefits from WTO expansion, but also political pressure. The United Nations must take a firm stand in favour of establishing, with the participation of all interested States, fair conditions for WTO accession that take into account the trade and financial needs of the acceding countries and their genuine development needs.

Belarus rejects the use of unilateral coercive measures in international relations as an instrument of political and economic pressure on sovereign States. Such measures not only contradict the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law but breed alienation, mistrust and hostility among nations. We end up dealing with simply absurd situations when economic sanctions are imposed under the pretext of promoting workers' rights but lead ultimately to job losses. By applying increasingly unilateral coercive measures of economic pressure, including extraterritorially, the well-known world centre of power has assumed de facto the rights of the United Nations Security Council. We have all witnessed this during the current general debate in the General Assembly.

We wish to draw the attention of the General Assembly to a particular aspect, the abuse by the United States of the right to be the world reserve currency manager and its deliberate creation of obstacles to the lawful economic activity of legitimate companies and banks from countries that are not deemed acceptable by the United States. This is a wake-up call for the entire international community. By designating States at will as acceptable or unacceptable, as good or bad, the United States is creating an atmosphere that suppresses dissent and diversity in international relations. That not only brings ideology and politicking into international relations but is an act of confrontation with each and every one who dares to have an independent opinion or who has the courage to pursue an independent foreign policy. The majority in this hall are member States of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). They are non-aligned to confrontation. Five decades ago the creation of the Movement was a protest against confrontation and a global response to the global challenge of confrontation. Today it is within our power to stop confrontation and to reject the solutions that it seeks to impose. Tomorrow belongs to positive ideas and actions and to interaction and cooperation for peace in the common interest of the entire international community.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelelah Al-Khatib, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Al-Khatib (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency of this session of the General Assembly and wish him every success in leading its deliberations. I should also like to extend my thanks to his predecessor Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for her good management of the deliberations of the previous session. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his unrelenting efforts since he assumed his office to

advance the work of the Organization and activate its role in the service of international peace and security.

The President returned to the Chair.

The Middle East region, of which Jordan is an integral part, continues to face formidable challenges stemming from the failure to make any progress towards solving its main regional issues. Jordan, however, has realized that these challenges should not become a justification for abandoning its national priorities regarding political and economic reform and for achieving the highest degree of openness and participation. Therefore, Jordan has adopted a national strategy that strikes a balance between continuing to effect reform and protecting its national security.

Jordan has also continued to deal with regional issues on the basis of its belief that it is necessary to reach just solutions by peaceful means and in a way that protects the rights of all concerned and that achieves regional stability. Jordan is firmly convinced that the use of military force and the imposition of unilateral solutions lead only to the aggravation of problems, increase the suffering of the people and threaten regional and international stability.

The Palestinian question, which is at the core of the Middle East conflict, is now at a decisive crossroads: either the regional parties and the international community succeed in making real and tangible progress and reach a just and lasting solution within a reasonable and agreed-upon time frame, or the entire region will be swept into extremism and anarchy, which will be a grave threat to world peace and security. Therefore, the international meeting scheduled to be held before the end of this year may be the last chance to make that progress. This makes it imperative for the United States, which called for that conference, the members of the International Quartet and the regional parties to prepare for it well, ensuring that final status issues between Palestine and Israel are seriously discussed and in a way that will allow real progress to be made on those issues and a lasting agreement to be reached and implemented quickly within a time frame agreed upon by the two parties.

The situation in the region cannot withstand the continuation of developments that do not allow for real progress. The holding of international and regional meetings and negotiations should not be an end in itself but rather a means to an end, namely reaching a real peace, accepted and preserved by the peoples of the region. Palestinian-Israeli negotiations have been going on for a long time. The whole world knows that records of those negotiations contain alternatives that provide solutions for final status issues. What is needed now is the political will to reach an agreement instead of looking for pretexts and prolonging the negotiations.

Israel will never enjoy the security it seeks and the Middle East region will not enjoy stability unless the Palestinian people recover their national rights through the establishment of an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian state in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and unless other Arab occupied territories are returned. The current situation in the Palestinian territories is not at all in harmony with the wish to achieve peace. In order to give the impression of honest movement towards peace, settlement activities must stop immediately, as must tampering with the status of East Jerusalem, including stopping all excavations in the Jerusalem holy sanctuary at Haram al-Sharif and putting an end to all practices that violate international law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Achievement of the desired progress requires a vast change to the tragic situation experienced by the Palestinians living in the occupied territories. There is an immediate need to revive the Palestinian economy in a manner that would lead to launching investment, creating vital projects and providing work opportunities. That revival will not materialize unless the Palestinians enjoy freedom of movement, which requires ending the closures, removing security roadblocks and stopping military operations. It is also imperative to enable the Palestinian National Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas and his legitimate Government, to rebuild its institutions so as to succeed in executing its national programmes, which deserve financial support from the international community.

A united and stable Iraq constitutes an essential component of balance and stability in the region. While Jordan welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1770 (2007), it supports the United Nations playing a central role in ensuring reconciliation and stability in that country. The preservation of any achievements on the security front will be accomplished only within an appropriate political environment, and this will necessitate real national reconciliation that will guarantee the participation of all segments of the Iraqi people in a political process

based on reviving Iraqi nationalism rather than sectarianism and ethnicity. It must be founded on the basis of the unity of the State and the sole right of the State to maintain security and ban militias from encroaching on that exclusive right. Moreover, we must prevent any interference in Iraq's internal affairs, whilst implementing what has been agreed upon, including a review of the Constitution and other laws and the building of national security and government institutions.

The fact that huge numbers of Iraqis have been forced to leave their country puts a tremendous burden on neighbouring countries, including Jordan. Jordan continues to host hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, with all the pressures that this imposes on Jordan's economy, resources and infrastructure, with little help from the international community. While we call on the international community to stand by us in dealing with this huge burden, we believe that a lasting solution to this problem lies in restoring stability to Iraq, so that its citizens can return to their country and contribute to its reconstruction.

Jordan and the Arab Group condemn the assassinations that have taken place in Lebanon, the latest of which being the assassination of member of Parliament Antoine Ghanem, a few days ago. These assassinations reflect the dangerous situation in that country and highlight the need for the international community to take a firm stand in putting an end to these grave violations of Lebanese sovereignty and to take all measures to stop any foreign interference in its internal affairs. This will ensure that the Lebanese people will find appropriate solutions through their constitutional institutions so as to ensure internal legitimacy, including the holding of presidential elections in accordance with the Constitution and within the time frame provided therein.

Jordan is working today within the Group of Eleven, which was launched at the initiative of His Majesty King Abdullah II to establish economic cooperation and support the development process of lower-middle income countries. We look forward to working with other States and groups of States, including, in particular, the Group of Eight (G-8), in order to establish cooperation that will enable the Group of Eleven members to preserve their economic accomplishments and achieve a breakthrough that will lead to success in attaining sustainable development.

Confronting extremism and terrorism requires more effective international cooperation as well as activating channels of cultural and religious dialogue, especially within the United Nations system. At the same time, there is an urgent need to refrain from Islamophobia and from inciting animosity against this tolerant divine religion. Today's world requires a more effective United Nations role in addressing international challenges, such as human rights, armaments, climate change, terrorism, international crime, poverty, hunger, infectious diseases, and increasing factional, sectarian and ethnic conflicts. In this context, we emphasize the importance of building upon what has been achieved, and we call for advancing the process of reform of the United Nations and its agencies in order to enable them to enhance their performance. We view the reform process as vital and of the highest priority. Jordan will continue to play a constructive role in this area and will continue to offer reasonable and applicable visions, especially within the context of reforming the work mechanisms of the Security Council.

Finally, I assure the Assembly that Jordan will keep its commitments to the achievement of international peace and security. The size of the Jordanian forces participating in peacekeeping operations and their geographically wide deployment reflect the actual role of Jordan in the United Nations system and reflect also its political will to help accomplish the mission of the Organization. We take this commitment very seriously and place the resources, professionalism and discipline of our armed forces at the service of international peace and security.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos Cuyaubé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. Moratinos Cuyaubé (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, at the outset I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. It is a great pleasure for me to address the General Assembly for the third time in order to take stock of the actions of the international community and to express commitment and share our thoughts regarding the priorities on our agenda.

When this world forum was created six decades ago, it was an expression of will and necessity; out of

will came commitment and out of necessity came awareness. The States represented here today are more committed and are more conscious than ever of the need to advance in establishing peace, combating poverty, protecting human rights, and furthering democracy and international law.

In our complex and uncertain world new and old challenges, new and old conflicts exist simultaneously. Our cooperation has improved in quality, but poverty continues to affect a large sector of the world's population. We are moving forward in promoting and protecting human rights, but gross violations persist. We seek peace, prosperity and dignity for all. What measures and instruments do we have to meet these challenges? How can we adapt them in order to respond more effectively?

Today, we know that no State alone can effectively address the global agenda and guarantee human development in a world that is increasingly uncertain and interdependent — though no less stimulating and creative for that. The means exist at the universal, regional and bilateral levels, as well as at the level of our many interrelationships. The structures and organizations that the international community has built with so much effort form a complex framework that we must reform, strengthen and update. Spain promotes effective multilateralism inspired by values and principles sustained by the people. The international community recognizes the need for a greater political consensus and effective cooperation, a trend seen within the United Nations system as well as in regional structures such as the European Union (EU), the Iberoamerican Community of Nations, or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Spain participates in those organizations, where optimism on progress is tangible. Despite the sometimes slow pace of progress, there is a global political awareness of the challenges affecting demography, sustainable human and economic development and their link to climate change.

Peace is possible and necessary — real peace, not just the absence of war. We need to clear the way for peace and political reason in the Middle East, a region fraught with violence and dramatic tension, which in turn affects the security and confidence of the international community. We must choose the power of words over that of arms, trust over mistrust, commitment over fear and dialogue and effective concerted action over disagreement. Spain wishes to help the parties and joins with the Quartet and its representative in seeking a final solution. In order to do this, we must establish an open dialogue without preconditions and draw renewed inspiration from the Madrid Conference. For peace to be complete, it must include Syria and Lebanon.

The meeting proposed by President Bush is an appropriate occasion to formalize everyone's commitment to this desired peace. Spain unreservedly supports that initiative.

We wish for a peaceful, viable and democratic Palestinian State, living in peace with Israel, and an Israel that is secure and has good relations in its region. The international community must support and assist parties in their efforts. Spain is firmly determined to make its contribution effective.

Spain's commitment in the region is also demonstrated by its participation in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). I truly hope that the Lebanese political forces will reach a consensus resolution of their political crisis without interference. I appeal for a political agreement in the name of peace, in the national interest of Lebanon and in the interest of the region.

The conflict in Western Sahara is one of the main obstacles to the integration process of the Arab Maghreb Union. We are actively committed to seeking a just and final political agreement that respects the principle of self-determination within the framework of the United Nations. Spain trusts that with the assistance of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy and the support of friendly nations, all parties will make progress and that the direct negotiations that have already been initiated will culminate in an agreement.

Constructive trust is fundamental, and that was behind the dialogue forum on Gibraltar in which important agreements were reached on matters of local cooperation of benefit to all. Spain hopes to make progress in reaching a final solution to the sovereignty dispute in accordance with the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations.

We have seen uneven progress in conflicts with a history of devastation and violence. We have also seen progress and change in conflicts that had been deadlocked, such as those in Georgia, Nagorny

Karabakh and Transdniestria, as well as in that relating to the status of Kosovo.

Peace is possible and necessary, and we are moving towards it despite being hit by terrorism, which poses a serious threat to peace and security. This global violence aims at undermining the stability of free and democratic societies and, as we agreed a year ago in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), we must prevail over that violence by coordinating our efforts and responding collectively. We are pleased that, in our determination to defeat terrorism, victims and their families have not been forgotten, and that the international community continues to urge respect for them. I believe that this is a well deserved acknowledgement and that without it the strategy against global terrorism would be incomplete.

Spain participates in peacekeeping operations authorized and mandated by the Security Council, in Lebanon, Afghanistan and the Balkans. Allow me, here in the General Assembly, to express my gratitude to the Spanish armed forces, the State security forces and others engaged in cooperative efforts for their work and solidarity in favour of peace. In particular, I pay heartfelt tribute to those Spaniards who have lost their lives in this effort and to their families and friends; only four days ago two Spanish soldiers died in Afghanistan. To assist in the logistics of peacekeeping operations, Spain has offered to establish a United Nations support base in Quart de Poblet in Valencia. A communications centre will be established there for the development of peacekeeping operations on the ground.

It is possible to defeat poverty. It is an ethical and political duty, a duty that Spain is firmly determined to shoulder. I am pleased and proud to say that my country today is the eighth-largest contributor to the United Nations system; our goal is to devote 0.7 per cent of our gross domestic product to development aid by 2012. In only three years, backed by political and social consensus, we have reinforced cooperation and increased its volume — to nearly €4.5 billion this year. Spain has expressed profound solidarity with and commitment to the goals set forth in the alliance against hunger and poverty.

We want access to drinking water and sanitation to be a universally enjoyed right. Water will be the central theme at International Expo Zaragoza 2008. That event will give participating countries and visitors insights into the fundamental aspects of water in the twenty-first century, such as the environment, international cooperation and prospects for scientific, technological and economic management. I encourage and invite members to participate in the 2008 Zaragoza exposition on water and sustainable development.

Spain wishes to assist in the structural strengthening of the United Nations and believes that institutional and managerial reform taking account of global civil society inputs is a priority.

That comment, Mr. President, is intended to highlight the progress made on the Security Council issue at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, during the mandate of your predecessor. It is essential for this very sensitive aspect of reform to be resolved through a political decision adopted by consensus, and not in haste.

We welcome the Human Rights Council as a forum to debate issues related to rights and freedoms. Spain reiterates its trust in that body and its desire to become a member next year. The protection and promotion of human rights is a fundamental pillar of Spain's foreign policy, because we are convinced that the violation of these rights leads to oppression and violence. We hope for the adoption at this session of a draft resolution on the abolition of the death penalty or, at the very least, on a universal moratorium.

The Alliance of Civilizations will mobilize the international community and global civil society to end the risk of polarization caused by the prejudices, erroneous ideas and extremism that can disrupt peaceful coexistence. Mr. Jorge Sampaio, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, has presented an implementation plan programme, and a trust fund for voluntary contributions has been set up with the support of the Group of Friends, involving more than 70 States and international organizations.

This has been a good year for Spain, and we would like to share it with the international community. Our presence abroad has increased due to the active involvement of our citizens and our institutions, economic stability and business activity, all of which has been conducive to greater openness to the rest of the world. This is not the time to be discouraged; rather, it is a time for commitment and optimism. An objective and rational analysis of the progress that the international community has made in recent years

should inspire hope and strengthen the will to work towards the development of a balanced agenda that addresses the challenges of our times. The States members of the General Assembly are more aware than ever that only through united action in solidarity can we meet these challenges effectively by using political dialogue, preventive diplomacy and public and humanitarian diplomacy. Spain sees the situation as positive. In that regard I would quote the Spanish poet Blas de Otero: "I ask for peace and I ask to speak ... in defence of man and his justice". That means a commitment to action, not rhetoric.

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Song Min-soon, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Song Min-soon (Republic of Korea): I should like first to offer my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. Kerim, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I am confident that under your distinguished leadership we will achieve great results during this important session. I take this opportunity to assure you of the Republic of Korea's full support for your noble endeavours.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his excellent service during his first year in office. Based on long experience of working closely with him, His Excellency President Roh Moo-hyun of the Republic of Korea and I have every confidence that he will continue to fulfil his role with distinction.

Today's global challenges require a collective response. Ever-widening globalization has brought with it a growing role for the United Nations. By virtue of its universality, the United Nations is the right body to deal with these global issues. No other organization can provide the legitimacy and authority that the United Nations offers. The United Nations has played an indispensable role in setting international norms and principles. It has pointed States and peoples in the right direction. By enhancing predictability and rule-based interaction between and among nations, the United Nations is able to prevent conflicts of interest from erupting into crises. Those are the quiet successes of the United Nations that often go unnoticed, precisely because the Organization helps to keep the international system running smoothly. This aspect of the work of the United Nations deserves full recognition and should be further strengthened.

At the same time, the United Nations can do better. We should persist in our efforts to strengthen the world body through reform. This will be essential in enabling the United Nations to respond effectively to the most daunting challenges of our era. As steps towards achieving that end, the Government of the Republic of Korea fully supports the important initiatives that the Secretary-General has taken to promote the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of the Secretariat. In particular, we appreciate his strenuous efforts to lead by example in changing the Secretariat's working culture.

Development, human rights and peace and security are the three pillars of the United Nations. They are all imperatives, and they are mutually reinforcing. Let me begin with development. The Millennium Development Goals agreed upon by our leaders in 2000 have a target year of 2015. We are already at the midpoint. It is essential that we assess the current situation and renew our commitment. But such actions will not be enough on their own. We need to identify more effective means to fulfil those commitments.

The Republic of Korea has been redoubling its efforts to enhance its official development assistance (ODA). We have committed ourselves to a threefold increase by 2015 from our current ODA level. To further support the international effort to eradicate poverty, we have joined the air-ticket solidarity levy initiative, an innovative source of financing for development. At the same time, drawing lessons from our own history of development, we place emphasis not only on increasing the scale of our aid but also on effectively sharing our experience with developing countries.

An issue closely related to development is climate change. There is a growing consensus that climate change is placing serious constraints on worldwide development capacity. It affects everyone everywhere. Therefore it must be urgently addressed. I hope that the political will shown by the leaders of more than 150 nations at the gathering held here on Monday, 24 September, leads to the adoption of a road map to a post-2012 regime of realistic, tangible solutions to this pressing concern. They should be

comprehensive and flexible enough to ensure participation by as many countries as possible.

Turning to human rights, it is vital that the Human Rights Council live up to the high expectations that surrounded its creation. We must do all we can to enable the Council to make real progress in the promotion of human rights. Let us renew our commitment and strengthen our joint efforts to ensure its success. As an inaugural member of the Council, the Republic of Korea is fully committed to the principle of all human rights for all.

In that regard my Government is deeply concerned about the current situation in Myanmar and the loss of civilian lives during the continuing protests. We strongly hope that the Government and the people of Myanmar will work together peacefully towards democratization and national reconciliation.

My Government has substantially increased its efforts to eliminate discrimination against vulnerable groups such as women, children and persons with disabilities. We have vigorously pushed for necessary legislation and the improvement of institutional frameworks to protect and promote the rights of such individuals. Also, we adopted a national action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights in May this year.

In the area of peace and security, United Nations peacekeeping missions are continuing to grow in importance as well as in the size and scope of their activities. The strengthened United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), operating in southern Lebanon, and the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur are two prominent examples.

Indeed, the rising demand for peacekeeping and the broad support of the international community are clear evidence of the crucial role of the United Nations in maintaining peace and security. For our part, the Republic of Korea's recent participation in UNIFIL testifies once again to our firm commitment to United Nations peacekeeping activities. We will make every effort to enable our well-trained and disciplined Korean contingents to contribute further to peacekeeping activities.

Peace cannot be sustained without development. A comprehensive approach is required in order to make the fragile peace of post-conflict situations durable and irreversible. With the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the critical task of consolidating peace and development has been institutionalized. In that regard, I believe that the experience of the Republic of Korea over the past half century in rebuilding the nation from the ashes of war since the 1950s could provide useful insights and encouragements that might help the post-conflict peacebuilding activities of the United Nations.

Terrorism continues to be one of the gravest challenges of our times. The Republic of Korea strongly condemns terrorism in all forms, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purpose. We fully support the ongoing global anti-terrorism efforts. The Republic of Korea is party to 12 existing anti-terrorism conventions, while being in the process of ratifying the latest International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. We are also of the view that the United Nations should lose no more time in concluding a comprehensive convention on terrorism.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and their delivery systems poses an ever-increasing threat to the international community. To curb WMD proliferation, our highest priority must be to restore the integrity and relevance of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. In fact the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime is at a crossroads. It has faced unprecedented challenges in recent years. In responding to those challenges we need to pool our wisdom to strengthen the current nuclear non-proliferation regime. The inherent deficiencies in the NPT should be remedied, and effective multilateral tools should be further developed to better serve the purposes of both nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

As home to the world's sixth-largest civil nuclear energy industry, the Republic of Korea regards the peaceful use of nuclear energy as crucial to our sustainable energy supply and economic development. That is all the more reason why we support strengthened safeguards against possible proliferation as a guarantee of the expanded use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Among the proliferation challenges facing the international community, the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea requires our

immediate attention. That problem, if not resolved soon, will seriously undermine the NPT regime. It also has significant implications for peace and security in North-East Asia and beyond. The Six-Party Talks are the main vehicle through which to resolve the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That process has made significant progress since its launch in 2003. In the Joint Statement of September 2005, the six nations agreed on a blueprint for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The Agreement on Initial Actions, of February this year, took that consensus another step forward, laying out specific actions to implement the Joint Statement. We hope that another agreement will be reached during the new round of the Six-Party Talks now under way in Beijing, leading to the disabling of the nuclear facilities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

On the Korean peninsula, inter-Korean relations will be taken to a higher level with the summit meeting to be held in Pyongyang next week between President Roh Moo-hyun and Chairman Kim Jong-il. The summit will first of all aim at consolidating peace on the Korean peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will be encouraged to move forward on the path to denuclearization. In the same vein, the leaders will explore ways to increase mutual trust through political and military confidence-building measures, as well as ways to lay the groundwork for an eventual inter-Korean economic community. With progress in the denuclearization process, a new peace regime will be established on the Korean peninsula to replace the half-century-old armistice. The deepening of inter-Korean relations and the improvement of ties between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and other countries concerned will warrant such a change.

The resolution of the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will thus have a ripple effect, extending its benefits well beyond the Korean peninsula. The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula will strengthen the NPT regime, serving as a useful example of a negotiated solution for similar problems in other parts of the world, including those in the Middle East. A peace process on the Korean peninsula will open the path to a regional security dialogue, and the resultant improvement in North-East Asian security will further strengthen regional and global cooperation for peace and prosperity.

That may be an optimistic view. But it is important that we see not only the threats and challenges in our world but also the opportunities. With the ongoing Six-Party Talks and next week's inter-Korean summit, we see a real opportunity for change, and we hope that our partners in this process will help us to transform today's uncertainty into tomorrow's stability and prosperity.

Our efforts in North-East Asia are a testament to the importance of diplomacy and international cooperation, as exemplified by the United Nations. Even the most daunting challenges can be overcome when nations join forces to share the burden. For the Republic of Korea, that is a lesson we have learned through hard experience. Ever mindful of the days when we gratefully received the assistance and support of the international community for our very survival, we now try to help others, whether by working to strengthen regional security, participating in peacekeeping missions far from home, or sharing our resources and knowledge. These will be our modest contributions to the betterment of all humanity, the noble purpose embodied in the United Nations.

The President: I call on Her Excellency Mrs. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Republic of Iceland.

Mrs. Gísladóttir (Iceland): First, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election. At the same time, I should like to pay tribute to the work of your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa.

On this occasion I want to say how much my country has benefited from the existence of the United Nations. The universal values enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have given a context and perspective to our sovereignty and self-determination. Iceland's story is testimony to the fact that it is through civilized coexistence within the community of nations that societies prosper. Within living memory, Iceland progressed from being one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the most prosperous. We have had the good fortune to be able to build a Nordic welfare society on the sustainable harvesting of our natural resources.

As a small, dynamic State without a military, it is our natural inclination to look for the peaceful settlement of disputes within the international

community. Our independence, which we achieved some 60 years ago, is built on more than our democratic institutions, fundamentally important though they are. Our freedom in the widest sense has been achieved through economic development as well as the guarantee of human rights and democracy.

In our experience, freedom is complex and multifaceted. All human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. But it is evident that poverty, inequality and the lack of economic and social rights can make the exercise of political and civil rights difficult.

We are now about halfway to our deadline for the Millennium Development Goals. The year 2015 is around the corner and we will soon need to deliver on our promises. There has been some good news: it seems likely that the goal of halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 will be reached. However, progress on many human development goals, such as on child mortality, has been disappointing. Regional challenges remain, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. It is incumbent upon those who have the good fortune to be prosperous to join in solidarity with others to make these rights available to all. What is more, the security challenges that we face this century are such that they can only be addressed together, in solidarity with others. Climate change is a prime example.

Indeed, the phenomenon of climate change is already devastating the lives of millions across a broad swathe of Africa, among many small island States and widely in Asia. Every region and most countries can expect to feel the effects of climate change in the near future. How we address this issue as an international community is a test of our commitment to the fundamental values of the United Nations and our ability to act together in light of our shared responsibility. The discussions that took place earlier this week were an important step in identifying means and measures in this respect, and I thank the Secretary-General for his initiative. Although climate change is a global phenomenon, it tends to be the poorest in developing countries that are hardest hit — those that are least responsible for causing climate change. Climate change is thus a severe threat to poverty reduction.

It is important that the international community treats adaptation to climate change not as a stand-alone issue but as an integral part of our common efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. A comprehensive approach is needed if we are to see results. The Government of Iceland is committed to showing solidarity with the most vulnerable in adapting to the effects of climate change.

Iceland regards women's empowerment and full participation at all levels as a fundamental issue for the new millennium. Whether in relation to peace and security, health, poverty or climate change, the empowerment of women is the key to success. Women and men need to be equally represented and listened to everywhere. I should like to reiterate Iceland's support for the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence regarding gender equality and women's empowerment. The current United Nations structure and approach to gender issues is too fragmented. The excellent work of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) must be built upon and reinforced within the new structures. We firmly support the establishment of a new gender entity to strengthen the performance of the United Nations in this field of work. Establishing the post of Under-Secretary-General for gender equality issues should provide strong leadership and coordination, and it is my hope that this post will be quickly filled. Gender mainstreaming has to be addressed throughout the whole United Nations system in a more systematic manner. Let us use the current momentum to bring this process forward at this session of the General Assembly.

Official development assistance (ODA) plays a vital role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Let me state clearly that Iceland views these Goals as common goals. We see development as mutually beneficial co-operation. Freedom for Iceland has been built through development and it is a vital element of freedom for all peoples. Donors need to deliver on their promises and accelerate their efforts in increasing development assistance. The Government of Iceland stands ready to shoulder its responsibility. Our ODA has doubled over the past four years and we aim to be among the top ODA contributors. Increased aid effectiveness is central to development results. The Government of Iceland believes that the United Nations should be at the forefront of such efforts. We support the follow-up of the report of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence (A/61/583), which in

our view will make the United Nations more effective in delivering results on the ground.

ODA is of course not a panacea. We need to make progress in international trade negotiations. When I had the privilege of attending the meeting of the African Union in Accra this summer, I was made aware by colleagues of the tremendous potential that African countries see in closer integration across that continent. In a globalized world closer regional cooperation and integration, including trade relations, has, in our experience, been a step towards a better future, a joint investment of nation States in their common well-being.

Iceland pledges full political support to our common goal of halting global warming. Bearing in mind that there is now a window of opportunity, which may close within a decade, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommendation on halving emissions should be taken seriously. Iceland has set itself a long-term aspirational goal of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 75 per cent by 2050. The Kyoto Protocol provides a basis for effective action by developed nations, which must lead the way in controlling emissions. But Kyoto is not universal and it is not enough. Iceland believes that the Bali meeting should start a process leading to a comprehensive climate agreement, ideally to be concluded in 2009, the year of the summit in Copenhagen. This agreement would cover the post-2012 period.

There is no "silver bullet" solution to the problem of global warming. The issue of deforestation, especially the rain forests, must be addressed. The role of new technology is crucial, particularly in regard to alternative, sustainable and clean sources of energy. In the field of geothermal energy, where Iceland has considerable experience, there is wide scope for development. New technology must not, however, exacerbate the very serious problems we already face. It is, for example, a matter of grave concern that increases in the production of biomass-based energy sources could be raising food prices. New sources of renewable energy must also adhere strictly to long-term environmental demands. This is particularly relevant to the planned build-up of nuclear energy reactors. The creativity and research capabilities of universities, the commitment and inclusiveness of non-governmental organizations and the drive of business and industry must be activated in a broad and consistent effort. Governments cannot do this alone.

Iceland regards human security, as formulated for example by the 2005 World Summit, to be of fundamental political and conceptual importance when it comes to discussing and deciding on action concerning peace and security. A key instrument for ensuring human security is Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which needs to be thoroughly implemented. Millions of individuals experience assaults on their personal security. I am thinking of the brutality inflicted by some Governments on their own people and by terrorists or irregular forces on civilians.

In this context allow me to express deep concern over events in Myanmar where the democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been held in detention for years and where the peaceful expression of political dissent is at present being brutally repressed.

I am thinking of the attacks on the providers of humanitarian aid in many conflict regions. I am thinking of the failure of authorities around the world to ensure the protection of women and children from violence and trafficking. In this context I should also like to encourage other Member States to support the draft resolution on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

I wish to express appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General, the African Union Commission Chairman, and the Security Council in finding a way forward towards alleviating the suffering of the people of Darfur. There is however still much to be done.

Crucial discussions are currently in progress to solve the decades-long situation in the Middle East. It is clear to me that most people in Israel and Palestine yearn for peace. Indeed, opinion polls bear this out. In particular, women from both sides voice their distress at the long-term effects of continued conflict on their children, who are the future of this region. The talks in progress at the moment, with the support of the Quartet, the efforts of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, and, most important, the efforts of the Israeli and Palestinian Governments, give some hope. I encourage political leaders to ensure that the will for peace among a great many people on both sides is reflected in the political process. This requires political courage and true leadership. It requires restraint when restraint is

most difficult. It requires a determination to outflank the spoilers on both sides who wish to sacrifice the real prospects for a peaceful and fulfilling life for millions to the distant mirage of some unattainable utopia. Final status issues, which are critical to the Palestinians and the Israelis, must be on the agenda for the peace conference that the President of the United States has proposed. The outcome must give both sides a clear view of a realistic and acceptable future for their children. Meanwhile, all who have it in their power, bear a responsibility to do their utmost to ensure the humanitarian needs of the civilian population.

Jordan and Syria, neighbouring States of Iraq, have made generous provision for hundreds of thousands of refugees from Iraq. Iceland is determined to contribute to alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people and has pledged funds to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the provision of schooling for Iraqi children in Jordan. We also stand firmly behind United Nations-mandated efforts to assist in the stabilization and rebuilding of the country.

Clearly a major threat to human security as well as State security is the proliferation of arms. Iceland regrets the current situation in the fields of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Despite sustained efforts by the majority of Member States over a number of years, only limited progress has been made, some of it outside the United Nations framework. Our failures in this area pose a constant threat to peace and security. Now is the time to renew our efforts. The conclusion of an arms trade treaty would certainly be a significant achievement. A number of projects launched by the United Nations Summit of 2005 have made steady progress, including the establishment of the Human Rights Council and of the Peacebuilding Commission. The 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) also gave the General Assembly the task of reforming the Security Council. The momentum for completing this work must be maintained so that the Security Council can be more representative of our world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This would entail an increase in the number of elected and permanent seats.

Iceland has been an active and committed Member of the United Nations since 1946. In the light of the principle of rotation and the importance of all Member States sharing in the responsibility of serving on the Security Council, we announced in 2000 our first-time candidacy for a seat for the period 2009-2010 with elections to be held next autumn. This candidature, which is actively supported by the other Nordic States — Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden — reflects Iceland's firm commitment to play an active role in cooperation with others in addressing the most pressing security threats of the twenty-first century. As a Nordic country we stand for a long tradition of active commitment to the United Nations and to the best interests of the whole. The Nordics have a reputation for being bridge-builders — trusted mediators in complex situations. Iceland seeks to shoulder the responsibility to exercise with fairness and firmness the role of a Security Council member.

The President: I now call on His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Brunei Darussalam.

Prince Bolkiah (Brunei Darussalam): May I offer my congratulations to you, Mr. President, your Government and people on your election. I would also like to offer my thanks to your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her leadership of the General Assembly over the past year. I also offer my congratulations to the Secretary-General on the progress he has made during the past nine months. His first report (A/62/1) is very encouraging, and we welcome his response to the new challenges we are all facing. I also wish to thank our United Nations representatives, workers and volunteers throughout the world who are undertaking very hard tasks which are often extremely dangerous. We thank them for their professional dedication. This is especially so in many parts of the Middle East. Here I offer once more our continued strong support for all the efforts being made by the United Nations to find a solution to the suffering of the Palestinian people. In doing so we reaffirm our solidarity with the people of Palestine in their efforts to find a just and lasting solution to problems that have been going on for almost 60 years.

My last word of thanks, Mr. President, is to you personally. We were most encouraged by your acceptance speech and your plan for the future. We were pleased to hear you express strong support for multilateral solutions to world problems. We certainly agree on the need for the United Nations to strengthen its central position in the multilateral system. Most of all, we are very happy with the idea of a lasting consensus among Member States, the private sector,

non-governmental organizations and civil society. We are especially pleased that civil societies were included. That means giving ordinary people a place in the consensus. That is why we found the statement so encouraging. Nevertheless, it has set a very serious challenge to the United Nations. It is most important that our people gain the understanding that comes from knowledge, experience and expertise. Our theme of climate change at this session shows this very clearly.

The many discussions we have had this week have taught us that all modern problems are extremely complicated. It has also shown us how important it is to gain a full understanding of these difficulties. If our people are to gain such understanding, it will come from having universal good education, good health and strong social services. This will come only when all countries have reached the United Nations Millennium Goals. So it is more urgent than ever that these Goals be reached on time. They cover all aspects of modern life — political, social, cultural, and, perhaps above all today, economic and commercial. As such they provide a way for people to understand modern problems well, take a full part in the consensus and help to find a solution.

I say this because we are now at the critical halfway point that we set seven years ago in planning the Millennium Development Goals. The discussion we have had all week on climate change shows how vital the next seven years will be. In my own country we have only just started to realize how difficult the subject is. It is like security and sustainable development and energy. These are all new, twenty-first century problems, and they all mean that our people need to learn more and more and to learn very quickly.

We need to include the subject I have mentioned in all aspects of national development planning, and we need to share knowledge and expertise. We believe that this is more important than ever. This is because by exchanging views and information on climate change this week we have also learned another new lesson, which teaches us that when it comes to modern twenty-first century problems we are all in them together. That is what your consensus, Mr. President, means. It recognizes that we all have an important contribution to make — if we work together. That is why we very much value the partnership you have proposed. We hope it will result in our people becoming far more than just receivers of solutions. We hope it will start to make them one of the most important agents in finding solutions.

We feel you have begun your term of office, Mr. President, by inviting us all to share a modern platform on which we can all work well. We are very pleased to join you and your consensus for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, and we wish you much success in broadening and strengthening it during the coming year.

The President (*spoke in French*): I call on His Excellency Mr. Moussa Okanla, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration, La Francophonie and Beninese Living Abroad of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Okanla (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, at the outset I should like to offer you my sincere congratulations on your brilliant election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. It will spare no effort to contribute to the success of the deliberations of this session, at your side, of course, because Benin is one of the Vice-Presidents.

I also pay tribute to the excellent job done by your predecessor, Her Excellency Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa. Throughout her term she was able to give new momentum to the General Assembly by relaunching the dialogue on the implementation of the global partnership for development. Under her clear direction our delegations were able to thoroughly study the many questions that have been pending within the framework of the implementation of the conclusions of the 2005 Summit, and they have been able to assess the challenges to be met.

We also express appreciation to the new United Nations Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon. He has been able to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor, Mr. Kofi Annan, by maintaining the pace of his reforms. Mr. Ban has not only maintained the momentum of the reforms but has also given them a visible personal mark that denotes a will to streamline in an innovative and consensual way the use of resources available for concrete action in keeping with the perils that confront us.

We support the United Nations, which must assert itself as an effective organization, capable of serving as a melting pot for multilateral, inclusive, productive and

conclusive cooperation in the search for appropriate solutions to the many challenges of our time.

These challenges include ongoing conflicts, the rise of extremism, the weakening and destabilization of entire regions, the continued impoverishment of the most vulnerable populations and the practice of trade subsidies and protectionism in developed countries. They deny us our comparative advantages and stifle our producers by distorting the international market. It is necessary and urgent to establish a safety net so that African countries affected by subsidies can compensate for the enormous losses that they suffer. In addition, social inequalities between States and within our societies are ever greater. The proliferation of endemic diseases decimates human resources. Malnutrition, desertification and coastal erosion dangerously reduce vital space and accentuate competition for survival, together with repeated flooding resulting from global warming linked to climate change.

We have indeed made considerable progress since the Rio Summit in terms of the implementation of instruments for global governance in the area of the environment. Given the warnings and many alarms that scientists have sent us in recent years we now need to accelerate their comprehensive implementation, because they give clear guidance to the efforts undertaken by men to restore control over phenomena and changes that jeopardize the conditions of our existence on Earth. It is urgent to maximize synergies within the framework of the implementation of these instruments to ensure greater effectiveness. That is one of the urgent tasks to be put on the agenda of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change scheduled for December 2007 in Bali, Indonesia.

The risks stemming from climate change are terrifying, particularly for low-income coastal countries such as Benin. They dictate that we act in advance instead of in response because we need to deal with well-established contingencies via a precautionary approach and by consistent implementation of the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Beyond the vast investments required to deal with coastal erosion and the deterioration of lands, the eradication of poverty and improving the living conditions of the poorest sections of the population are essential aspects of efforts undertaken to strengthen the resistance of our societies to the negative impacts of climate change.

Above all we must increase our efforts to transform our patterns of consumption and global energy policies by using renewable energy sources. By way of example, switching from firewood to solar stoves would save many hectares of forests that are annually decimated by the poorest populations to ensure their energy supplies. It has been established that the manner in which the world's energy needs, particularly those of developing countries, will be covered in the decades to come will be key to our ability to address climate change. We need to carry out a change of mindset to bring about a change in behaviour. To do this, the question of financing needs to be resolved in a clearly understood spirit of international solidarity and interdependence.

The international community will need to deliver on the pledges made in Monterrey and Gleneagles by mobilizing the funds to ensure implementation of the national programmes of action and adaptation and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. It is fortunate that the high-level dialogue to be held in New York on 23 and 24 October 2007 and the meeting to be held in Qatar in 2008 will give us an opportunity to bring about a thorough evaluation of the situation in order to seek the optimum solutions to the problems before us.

Assessing performance in the area of financing for development is how we should measure the effectiveness of international financial institutions. Our hope is that appropriate reforms will be undertaken so that they will be able to fully shoulder their responsibilities in terms of mobilizing resources for poor countries so that they can make up the lag.

Special attention needs to be given also to internal constraints related to governance and to the meagre mobilization of local resources that curb economic and social development. The Government of Benin, for example, has intensified its efforts to root out corruption and promote transparent and effective management of public finances. Our efforts in these areas are coupled with measures to facilitate investment, including the establishment of a presidential investment council and the proclamation of free nursery and primary schooling, measures that have been judged to be essential for the continued strengthening of democracy, economic growth and social progress. The assistance from the international community is greatly appreciated and is now being directed exclusively to the goals agreed upon. In this

regard, Benin has joined the peer review mechanism instituted by the African Union within the framework of the promotion of good governance and peacebuilding continent-wide.

Our search for solutions to the new threats can only progress if we are able to preserve international peace and security. It is disappointing that our efforts since the 2005 Summit to reform the body which has the primary responsibility for this, have been less than conclusive. We need to rekindle our fervour in order to give the Organization a Security Council that is more representative in terms of its membership and more transparent and effective in its working methods. Whatever the formula decided upon, reform of the Security Council cannot be viable if it does not take into account the realities of today's world, which differ greatly from those of the 1940s. It cannot be fair if it does not rationally rectify the boundless harm done to Africa by excluding it from the category of permanent members of the Security Council.

Reform of the Council will undoubtedly reflect on its authority and its ability to fulfil its mandate in a satisfactory manner with respect to the situations concerning the fundamental principles of the Charter, such as the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is more than 50 years old now. That conflict continues to destabilize the Middle East, and it cannot be otherwise so long as the vision of two sovereign, contiguous States has not been implemented and the occupied territories, including the Golan Heights and the Shaba'a farmlands, have not been returned.

We are also concerned by the continued arms race and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the stalemate in the multilateral negotiations. We need to stem the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons by adopting and implementing a treaty on arms trafficking. The proliferation of non-State armed groups, widespread violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes against civilian populations, particularly against women and children in situations of conflict, must continue to be given our unswerving attention. The perpetrators of these crimes need to be tried by the International Criminal Court, whose role as a deterrent needs to be enhanced by greater cooperation with the Security Council and the authority to initiate proceedings itself. We welcome the fact that great progress has been made in the deployment of a United Nations mechanism for monitoring and outreach on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts and on the possibility of it being extended.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union within the framework of the implementation of the Union's 10-year plan of support for capacity-building needs to be continued in accordance with the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter. Management of the situation in Darfur has given us a field for experimentation that will enable us to draw lessons to strengthen the effectiveness of this cooperation beyond the constraints and handicaps by looking at optimal solutions. We welcome the establishment of the hybrid force. Our hope is that its numerical and logistical capacities will enable it to deal with the crisis. We hope that similar efforts will be undertaken for Somalia.

The promotion of human dignity is necessary to be able continually to strengthen international peace and security. It is at the heart of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed on 10 December 1948. We commemorate its sixtieth anniversary next year. This is an opportunity to undertake singular and proactive action to disseminate human rights for rural and peri-urban populations and communities, which are for the most part illiterate. These social strata have been cut off from the benefits of human rights but would be empowered and would become responsible for their own fulfilment if given access to human rights.

My country, which is firmly committed to democracy, here reiterates its unswerving commitment to make an effective contribution commensurate with its means to the protection and promotion of human dignity. That is the aim of my country's proposal for a new agenda item at the current session of the General Assembly with the consensus title of "Celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". A draft resolution will be submitted and negotiated under this item. It could also serve as the framework for the proclamation of an international year for the promotion, dissemination and appropriation of human rights.

In that connection, my country, together with the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and all interested parties, proposes to organize an international conference in 2008 on the challenges and issues involved in democratic changes of government. I urge all United Nations Member States to support these

initiatives so that they will come to pass for the betterment of our peoples.

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Adrian Mihai Cioroianu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Mr. Cioroianu (Romania): Allow me to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation and congratulations to you, Mr. President, upon your election to the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-second session and to wish you full success in this challenging endeavour. At the same time, I should like to extend my appreciation to Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for her excellent work as President at the sixty-first session. Romania fully subscribes to the statement delivered by His Excellency José Socrates, the Prime Minister of Portugal, on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to add some reflections on the interests of my country. Romania remains firmly attached to its engagement in favour of efficient multilateralism on all three pillars of United Nations activity — peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

Romania wishes to be an active participant in all ongoing reform processes according to the guidelines we accepted in the Millennium Summit Outcome. It seems there is a quasi-consensus on the principle of the enlargement of the Security Council but not yet on the practical ways in which this could take place. We all know that this is because the structural reform of a principal organ has profound political implications. It seems also that there is little disagreement on the general principle that the Security Council should reflect the geopolitical configuration of the present-day world. We believe that the comprehensive solution offered by an intermediary stage should be regarded positively, precisely because at this stage it is general enough to allow everybody to see that the new configuration would come closer to one's aim. Let us see if it stands the test of substantive negotiations. Nevertheless, negotiations on the enlargement of the Security Council should not prevent progress and decisions being made on other dimensions, namely, improving the working methods of the Security Council, particularly on the issue of the transparency of Security Council activity and the possibility of limiting veto use. Finally, with 23 members the Eastern European Group should be entitled to at least one additional seat in the Security Council in any formula to be agreed upon. It should also be re-emphasized that, despite being the most dynamically growing regional group within the United Nations General Assembly, the Eastern European presence in managerial positions in the United Nations Secretariat and in United Nations bodies is still minimal.

Romania follows with particular attention the latest developments in Kosovo. The solution for the status of the province of Kosovo needs to be in line with the international law in force. We welcome the efforts of the Troika to facilitate the negotiations between the two parties. The direct talks that were held today here in New York represent a positive evolution, and similar meetings should be organized in the months to come. Direct negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina will contribute to reaching a genuine compromise that will support the stability of the Western Balkans and the European perspective of this region.

(*continued in French*)

In Iraq positive developments in the area of institution building, interfaith reconciliation and security must be consolidated through regional and international support. The new Security Council resolution 1770 (2007) represents a broad United Nations mandate to provide assistance for development and reconstruction and mediation for political dialogue at the national and regional levels. We welcome the ministerial meeting on Iraq on 22 September last, chaired by the Prime Minister of Iraq and the United Nations Secretary-General. We believe that the efforts of the international community with regard to Iraq will bear fruit. Romania is present on the ground and stands with the people and Government of Iraq.

Preventing and combating terrorism require effective multilateralism, based on the norms of international law. We must meet the threat of international terrorism with concerted action. Global action against terrorism requires measures to disrupt groups involved in terrorist activities through international cooperation. Our efforts to combat terrorism must be unrelenting but they must respect fundamental human rights and freedoms. Combating terrorism must also take account of the social and economic roots of terrorism. No country can ensure its security alone. Romania supports efforts undertaken by international, regional and subregional organizations to build up international solidarity against terrorism in accordance with international law, and it cooperates

bilaterally with other countries to prevent and combat this scourge.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the pillar for the international legal system in the area of nuclear non-proliferation. It is also an essential instrument for promoting international peace and security. Despite all the difficulties in recent years, the NPT is still relevant and significant. The balance between rights and duties enshrined in the Treaty is essential for the stability of the international system. The maintenance of the fundamental principles of the Treaty on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and international cooperation, as well as guarantees to observe non-proliferation requirements, are essential.

Romania places a great deal of importance on developing nuclear energy and promoting its peaceful use in areas such as medicine, industry, agriculture and in other areas of public usefulness. Romania also agrees with the idea that adopting nuclear energy as an ecologically sound alternative source of energy in the context of implementing the Kyoto Protocol is an important choice.

The international community must give priority attention to the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and access by terrorists to these types of weapons. My country does not neglect problems related to conventional weapons and firmly supports the need to start structured consideration of the question of a future international legal instrument on the weapons trade.

Romania is participating actively in peacekeeping operations by providing military observers, staff officers, guards and police officers to 10 peacekeeping operations in four continents — Haiti, Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Sudan, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, Timor-Leste, Georgia and Kosovo. Romania is also participating in peace operations in the Western Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Blue Helmets deserve the gratitude of host countries and of the international community. We believe that in setting up multinational forces under the auspices of the United Nations we should take account of the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the country where the Blue Helmets are deployed.

Romania, now a member of the European Union, evolved under the political idea that democracy, human rights and the rule of law are essential for the development of our societies. That is why we would like to commit to supporting, in an imaginative fashion, human rights, democracy, tolerance and diplomacy as a means for settling all disputes, as well as dialogue between cultures and civilizations. It is worthwhile recalling that Bucharest hosted the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) High-Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding in June 2007. That Conference was an opportunity to highlight the need to react at the political and institutional levels to combat all forms of intolerance and discrimination in order to guarantee respect for human rights and to ensure that every citizen feels protected by the law and has concrete proof of the solidarity of others when his or her rights are flouted.

I believe that the international community needs to give deeper consideration to some sensitive issues in order to adopt appropriate measures. I am thinking about the need to ensure that the rights of children are protected, and that is why Romania supports the establishment of the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General to combat violence against children.

My Government pays particular attention to action taken by the Human Rights Council, especially since from last June to mid-2008 the chairmanship of this new institution is held by Romania. The institutional structure of this organization is almost complete. What we have achieved is a compromise. The new Council is not the irreproachable body that we had imagined, but it needs to be used, because promotion of respect for human rights is a battle we must wage relentlessly. The General Assembly's approval of the report of the Human Rights Council, which also includes the institutional package adopted halfway through this year, will certainly help us meet this goal. This new institution must put to greater use its calling, which is to increase awareness of and respect for human rights and to strengthen those rights worldwide. It must also ensure that States honour their commitments. Romania reiterates its confidence in the capacity of the Human Rights Council to become a sound and credible example in the institutional system devoted to protecting human rights.

Democracy is a global process. Twenty-five years ago, less than one third of the States worldwide could be deemed to be true democracies. Now that

percentage has increased considerably and represents the standard. We believe that progress in the principles of democracy and human rights in political decisions represents a victory for us all. With the common efforts of member States, a considerable number of resolutions and declarations on various aspects related to democracy have been adopted. For example, in 2000 the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolution 2000/47, "Promoting and consolidating democracy", introduced by my country.

The resolution brought together, for the first time in a single coherent document, the principles, values and practices that represent a framework for actions taken by governments to promote democracy.

Of course there are close ties between democracy and respecting human rights. That is the primary message that Romania and other sponsors wanted to transmit through resolutions on pursuing dialogue on measures to promote and consolidate democracy, democracy and human rights, and reinforcing the role of regional, subregional and other mechanisms and organizations to promote and consolidate democracy. All those resolutions were adopted.

We are also very pleased to see that the Community of Democracies has now become an active group committed to promoting the values and standards of democracy. We are prepared to work with other delegations that are members of the working group in the Community of Democracies. Romania recently took on the task of coordinating the group in anticipation of the next ministerial conference, to be held in Bamako.

As a Member of the United Nations that benefits from constant and sound economic growth, Romania will join the group of donor countries by the end of this year. Official development assistance designed as a gradual and progressive commitment will now be a key part of our foreign policy and an expression of our international solidarity with countries in transition or developing countries. We already have a national strategy, an institutional structure and a budget with a line item for official development assistance. Above all, we have unswerving political commitment. We will look closely at all options for providing voluntary contributions through the United Nations system in setting our initial priorities.

On climate change, the United Nations clearly has a key role to play in assisting regions devastated by natural catastrophes. We are fully aware of the staggering impact of climate change on human beings. Let us recall the words of Immanuel Kant, who said that "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me". Let moral law and reason prevail so that we can preserve the starry sky. It is likely that the general degree of freedom has never attained such a high level in the history of mankind as it has in our day. If we are freer, more informed and more aware than our forefathers, we also have a greater responsibility to care for our environment. This year, Romania, like other countries, has suffered the consequences of climate change — extremely hot temperatures and drought followed by torrential rains and flooding. Political leaders must support the formulation of a new legal instrument. They must support scientific research in order to reduce the world economy's dependence on fossil fuels and to stimulate the discovery of new technologies.

In 1990, Romania began political and economic action towards sustainable development and a sustainable economy. Thus, in 1994 Romania ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and in 2001 the Kyoto Protocol. Given these almost unprecedented phenomena, we need to consolidate regional and European capacity to act. To that end, the relevant Romanian institutions have considered holding a high-level regional meeting to discuss policies in response to global warming, in particular action and support mechanisms with regard to problems related to drought. This initiative will be concentrated on Central Europe and South-East Europe.

Romania places particular importance to the dialogue among cultures and religions. We believe this has become essential for meeting today's global challenges. My country is rich in cultural diversity. It lies at the crossroads of cultures and civilizations and is fully engaged in international and regional initiatives to promote intercultural and interfaith dialogue. The third European Ecumenical Assembly, which was held at the beginning of September at Sibiu, Romania — the European Capital of Culture for 2007 — is a clear recent example of our culture of dialogue.

Today's world is constantly changing and requires increased cooperation within the international community. That is why we welcome the joint activities of the United Nations and the International

Organization of La Francophonie (OIF). From 25 to 29 September 2006, that forum met in Bucharest, Romania. As host country for the eleventh Summit, our country chaired the Conference of Heads of Francophone State or Government, as well as the Ministerial Conference of La Francophonie. In playing this double role we felt it our duty to be very actively involved not only in institutional reform but also in furthering cooperation among French speakers.

Despite criticism, deserved or not, the United Nations is still a necessary organization without which the international community would lose its way. Economic globalization and the information society are strengthening, not weakening, the universal calling, the legitimacy and the moral authority of this Organization. But it is up to us, the Member States, to serve the Organization beyond our narrow or fleeting interests.

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Masahiko Koumura, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Mr. Koumura (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; interpretation provided by the delegation*): First, let me join other speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I should also like to pay high tribute to Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for her leadership during the previous session. My great appreciation goes as well to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his dedication and initiative in addressing the many challenges confronting the United Nations.

In the face of new challenges, the United Nations needs to transform itself from forum to actor. The demands of the twenty-first century call for the creation of a United Nations that is proactive. I commend the Secretary-General's determination to bring about this change. It is no coincidence that, given the current international environment, Japan also has embarked on a proactive foreign policy. With our approaches thus in harmony, Japan and the United Nations can and must work together. In my remarks this evening I will emphasize two areas in which the cooperation between the two actors may be optimized: climate change and African development. I will also touch on the need for United Nations reform, notably the reform of the Security Council, so that the United Nations may address those missions effectively.

In the era of globalization, the international community has come to face new challenges that reach across borders. In particular, climate change will be a crisis for all humanity, not only the people of today but also the generations of the future. Now is the time for all of us to take action for future generations, giving special consideration to vulnerable countries. Let us leave behind discord and division among nations and shift gears to combine our efforts in order to face this common challenge. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has indicated that the fact of global warming is unequivocal, so world leaders have the responsibility to make bold new political decisions to address this growing challenge. With such responsibility in mind, Japan presented a new proposal on climate change in May and has proposed that we collectively embrace a long-term vision for developing innovative technologies and building a low-carbon society. Japan has also called for a mid-term strategy for a new framework that includes all major emitters of greenhouse gases.

We need to tackle climate change without pause up to and beyond 2012. In this regard, I highly commend the political commitment expressed by world leaders at the high-level event held on 24 September under the initiative of the Secretary-General. Japan for its part will contribute to the negotiations for an international agreement through the Group of Eight (G-8) Hokkaido-Toyako Summit to be held next year, and will feed the results back into the United Nations process.

Japan has gained in international competitiveness by improving energy efficiency and decreasing oil consumption during a period in which its gross domestic product (GDP) doubled. We are ready to share our technologies and experience, which hold the key to achieving environmental preservation, energy security and economic growth in tandem. At the same time, each and every one of us needs to move forward from mere ideas and reconfigure our own way of life. Japan is promoting a new national campaign aimed at reducing the carbon dioxide emissions of individual households, in addition to the introduction of the Cool Biz — casual dress code — initiative. The spirit of *mottainai* — rejecting wastefulness — and the Three Rs initiative to reduce, reuse and recycle waste also contribute to this aim. It is my intention to globally broaden the campaign to restructure our lifestyles. To that end, my Government values exchanges with

corporations, academics, non-governmental organizations and various other actors in public forums, while at the same time cooperating with the United Nations Global Compact.

Another priority area for Japan is African development. Africa as a whole is now undergoing positive change. Peace is being consolidated in several former conflict areas. Meanwhile, many countries, both with and without natural resources, are growing robustly.

For Africa to become a more vibrant continent, a continent of greater hope and opportunity, three things are particularly important in addition to the prevention and resolution of conflicts. First and foremost, economic growth must be enhanced and sustained. Secondly, human security needs to be ensured through the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the consolidation of peace and the establishment of democratic governance. Finally, the issues of the environment and climate change must be addressed.

Japan will host the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) in Yokohama in May 2008. TICAD, whose first meeting was held in 1993, is a process open to all. The TICAD process places particular importance on African ownership and true partnership with the international community. The three areas that I have just mentioned will be the focus of the discussion at TICAD IV, which will be a fresh opportunity to mobilize the knowledge and resources of the international community for African development. South-South cooperation between Asia and Africa will remain a key feature in the TICAD process.

Without peace in Africa, the world at large will not enjoy peace and prosperity. Japan cannot ignore the situation in Darfur. Faced with the world's worst humanitarian crisis, Japan has provided assistance amounting to approximately $85 million. Japan also welcomes the establishment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and looks forward to its early deployment as well as to steady progress in the political process in Darfur. Japan intends to further enhance its contribution for the consolidation of peace and stability in Africa.

Peace paves the way for development and human security. However, achieving peace is not an easy task. Iraq, for example, is struggling to achieve security and reconciliation, and the foundation for peace remains weak. Japan has been assisting the reconstruction efforts of the Iraqi people by measures such as dispatching its Self-Defence Forces and providing official development assistance of up to $5 billion.

To help in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, Japan has played a leading role in the field of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the disbandment of illegal armed groups, working in close cooperation with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Japan hosted the Conference on Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups in Tokyo in June this year to contribute to the rebuilding of Afghanistan through joint efforts with the United Nations.

To build peace, it is essential for the international community to ensure a seamless and comprehensive effort to fulfil tasks ranging from resolving conflicts to assisting reconstruction. As current Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Japan is resolved to make a significant contribution to such international efforts. One concrete measure that has been taken is the launch of the Hiroshima Peacebuilders Centre to train civilian experts in Asia to better respond to various needs on the ground.

Free and fair elections and democracy are also essential for the consolidation of peace. Japan spares no effort to provide assistance in order to promote democratization. Japan has dispatched election observer missions to a number of countries, including Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone. Japan has also provided election-related support and dispatched arms monitors to Nepal.

It is extremely regrettable that the crackdown on the demonstrations in Myanmar has caused casualties, including the death of a Japanese citizen. Japan calls on the Government of Myanmar to exercise utmost restraint and to refrain from the use of oppressive force. Japan demands that the Government of Myanmar make every effort to resolve the situation through dialogue.

Along with democracy, the rule of law helps to lay the groundwork for peace and prosperity. To promote the rule of law in the international community, Japan will accede to the Statute of the International Criminal Court next month, and is helping to improve legal systems in developing countries. In February, in order to give proactive support to the norm-setting role

of the United Nations, Japan signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and today I have signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Behind those endeavours lies the conviction that the international community must cooperate in addressing international challenges based on such fundamental principles as freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The primary pillar of such fundamental values is respect for human dignity. The issue of abductions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea poses a serious challenge to human dignity. It is essential that the international community send a strong message calling for the earliest resolution of the abduction issue so that the victims and their families may be reunited and have an opportunity to recapture their former happiness. Japan will continue to work towards the resolution of this issue as well as the settlement of the issues of the unfortunate past through dialogue in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration. With hope for an improvement of the human rights situation, Japan will also pursue the adoption of a draft resolution on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at this session of the General Assembly.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is another challenge that requires the undivided attention of humankind. From that point of view I welcome the Security Council's adoption by consensus of a series of resolutions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. It is now up to all of us to translate the will of the international community into concrete action through full implementation of the relevant resolutions. Japan will continue its efforts to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through the Six-Party Talks. Japan will also continue to urge Iran to heed the unanimous voice of the international community and suspend its enrichment-related activities.

Nuclear disarmament should receive no less attention. I reiterate here the determination of my country to reinforce international efforts for nuclear disarmament, as the only country in the world that has suffered nuclear devastation. Japan will again submit a draft resolution at this session of the General Assembly to map out concrete measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The issue of terrorism also requires sustained efforts as it becomes increasingly complex. In that regard, Japan welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1776 (2007). For our own part, we will make efforts to continue our refuelling activities in the Indian Ocean to fulfil our role as a responsible member of the international community. Japan also supports the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288). Furthermore, to strengthen the legal counter-terrorism framework I call upon every State to exercise the utmost flexibility for an early conclusion of the negotiations on a draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

In the face of a variety of threats to international peace and security, the Security Council has come to play a more relevant role than ever before. For the Security Council to live up to its expected responsibilities, we need to make it more representative and effective. I therefore renew Japan's determination to pursue early reform of the Security Council, with the expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent membership. As has been reiterated time and time again, no reform of the United Nations will be complete without reform of the Security Council. The momentum for such reform, renewed by former Assembly President Al-Khalifa, must be strengthened as we enter the sixty-second session. All Member States must work together so that we can achieve concrete results through intergovernmental negotiations during this session.

What is required today is not to wait for change, but to bring it about. The question is not what to expect of the United Nations, but how we may revitalize the Organization. We need to enhance the capacity of the United Nations to deal with new challenges.

In addition to striving to implement Security Council reform, Japan will actively engage in efforts to strengthen the ability of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. Japan also supports the ongoing endeavours to enable the United Nations system to work more coherently and effectively in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance, the environment and human rights. At the same time, we need to achieve concrete results in management reform.

In connection with reform, let me remind Member States that world leaders took a major step forward in 2005 by resolving to delete the long-

obsolete "enemy States" clauses from the United Nations Charter at the earliest opportunity (see resolution 60/1, para. 177). Next year, Japan will take centre stage in international efforts. At TICAD IV in Yokohama and the G-8 Summit at Tokyo, Japan will set forth principles for dealing with imminent international challenges. I hope to bring back solid results to New York a year from now.

Let me conclude my remarks by renewing Japan's unwavering commitment to work, in close cooperation with the United Nations, to change the world for the better.

The President: I should like to congratulate Mr. Koumura on his recent appointment as Minister for Japan.

We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting. Several representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): I am taking the floor to exercise my right of reply to the statement made earlier today by His Excellency the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Mr. Erdoğan referred to the so-called Turkish republic of northern Cyprus. I will not elaborate on that imaginary entity, created by Turkey in the area of Cyprus it has occupied since 1974 and which has been condemned by the Security Council in its resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984). I will only point out that this insistence on promoting it verifies that Turkey has no interest in the reunification of Cyprus and is making no effort to that end. Firmly glued to the past, the Turkish Prime Minister continues to recite his country's long-standing position on the 2004 Annan Plan to solve the Cyprus problem. He fails to mention, however, that his country's fondness for that Plan derives from the fact that it was deliberately tailored to suit its interests and was therefore risk-free for it. In addition, the acceptance of a plan that was prearranged to entail no unmanageable or unfavourable after-effects for Turkey is by no means an accomplishment.

Mr. Erdoğan's assessment of why the Greek Cypriot community was compelled in exercise of their democratic rights to overwhelmingly reject the Plan is insulting and falls outside the boundaries of diplomatic convention. In addition, Mr. Erdoğan is in no position to speak of intransigence, since the non-settlement of the Cyprus problem after all these years is due exclusively to the refusal of Turkey and its supporting Turkish Cypriot leadership to negotiate on the core of the Cyprus question.

It is ironic that Mr. Erdoğan is calling for the resumption of negotiations when his side has been gradually driving to ruins an ongoing dialogue on the implementation of the carefully crafted 8 July 2006 agreement, which is the only existing process and which can lead to meaningful negotiations through a gradual approach that is based on progress ultimately yielding a comprehensive settlement.

It is not enough to rehearse a series of unsubstantiated slogans that are devoid of meaning and contribution. That applies to the entirety of Mr. Erdoğan's statement vis-à-vis Cyprus, including the reference to restrictions imposed on Turkish Cypriots. What Mr. Erdoğan means by this, of course, is the situation Turkish Cypriots find themselves in because of his country's invasion of Cyprus. Even so, Turkish Cypriots enjoy a per capita income that Turkish citizens would envy. If Mr. Erdoğan aims at promoting the economic development of Turkish Cypriots, then all he has to do is lift the restrictions his army imposes through the occupation of one third of Cyprus, so that Turkish Cypriots may go back to living in normal conditions.

As equal citizens of the Republic of Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots enjoy a high level of social and other protection by the Cyprus Government, but of course in a manner that simply does not accommodate the illegal regime. The Government of Cyprus has no doubt about its sovereignty over the totality of its territory, its territorial sea and its airspace or about its sovereign rights over its exclusive economic area, its continental shelf and the resources therein. It has never sought anything more than peaceful existence. But as if it were not enough for the aggressor to have denied us that for all these years, Turkey adds insult to injury by questioning my country's sovereign rights and coveting its sovereign resources and by using its power to malevolently prevent my country from attaining the peaceful existence and coexistence it so desires.

Mr. Salsabili (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am speaking in exercise of the right of reply to respond to the unacceptable claims made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates. This afternoon the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates made some unacceptable claims against Iranian territorial integrity in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf. The Islamic Republic of Iran has clearly and repeatedly put on record its position on this issue, and I do not intend to repeat it here in detail.

Suffice it to say that the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to its international obligations, especially those arising from the memorandum of understanding of 1971 between Iran and Sharjah on this very issue. We firmly believe that misunderstandings over the interpretation or application of that memorandum of understanding, if any, should be addressed with goodwill and through mutually agreed mechanisms in order to find an acceptable solution. My Government has always welcomed interaction and exchange of views between the relevant officials of Iran and the United Arab Emirates on issues of mutual interest and concern. We always give the highest priority to promoting friendly relations with the brotherly littoral countries of the Persian Gulf. We firmly believe that continuous dialogue between the two States, based on mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, could continue, in order to remove any existing misunderstanding.

Mr. Al-Hebsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of my country's delegation I should like, once again, to express our disappointment at what has just been said by a member of the Iranian delegation with regard to the Emirates' three occupied islands — Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa. The United Arab Emirates regrets that such untrue claims continue to be made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on the pretext of what it calls a misunderstanding over the islands. But in reality, this is an attempt to cover up attempts to change historical, legal and political facts pertaining to its occupation of these islands. We consider that unbalanced Iranian policy to be a clear violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law as well as the firm foundations that govern international relations and the principle of good-neighbourliness between countries.

We wonder why the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued for years to refuse to respond to repeated peaceful initiatives by my country calling for serious and direct bilateral negotiations on the details of this issue in order to guarantee a fair resolution, or for resort to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to seek a fair legal opinion on the matter. We interpret Iran's continued rejection of these peaceful initiatives as a weakness in the political and legal argument that it uses to entrench its unjust and illegitimate military occupation of our three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

This comes at a time when my country has all the facts, documents and historical, legal and demographic evidence that prove that those islands fall under the national sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates.

We therefore hope once again that the Iranian Government will reconsider its policy and respond seriously to my country's language of logic and wisdom in order to reach a just, comprehensive and equitable resolution of this issue in conformity with international law — a resolution that would return the three islands to United Arab Emirates sovereignty. If that were to be achieved, it would strengthen good-neighbourliness and cooperation between our two countries and peoples and would help to spread peace, security, stability and prosperity throughout the region.

Mr. Pak Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I should like to speak in exercise of the right of reply to the statement just made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. In his statement, he mentioned the issue of the abduction of a few Japanese, distorting the facts by saying that nothing has been done concerning this issue. In fact, when the delegation of Japanese political parties, led by the former Prime Minister of Japan, Tomiichi Murayama, visited Korea in 1999, Mr. Murayama asked my Government to confirm the whereabouts of the 13 Japanese who had been reported missing. So my Government, taking the humanitarian nature of the issue of the missing persons into consideration, organized a special investigative committee in 2002 to conduct the investigation on a nationwide scale. The results of the investigation proved that there were cases in which some Japanese had been abducted by individual Koreans, dating from the late 1970s and early 1980s.

So, during the visit by former Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi to my country in 2002, the Japanese side was informed of the results of the investigation, namely that the 13 missing Japanese were confirmed to be abductees. Formal regret was also expressed for the emergence of the abduction issue. Five of them were still alive and eight had died.

It was by no means a cynical decision that the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea opted to settle, among other things, the issue of a few more than 10 Japanese abductees out of sincerity, in particular given the fact that Japan forcibly drafted more than 8.4 million Koreans, killing more than 1 million and forcing 200,000 Korean girls and women into sexual slavery for the imperial Japanese army. Furthermore, in November 2004 my country provided every facility to the Japanese Government joint delegation made up of relevant officials from the Cabinet, Foreign Ministry and National Police Agency and medical-legal experts, so that they could visit my country for a week and confirm on the spot the deaths of the aforementioned Japanese. As I have already mentioned, thanks to the sincere efforts exerted by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, five survivors from among the 13 abductees, and all of their seven sons and daughters, went to Japan.

Those are the real facts of what we have done in order to solve with sincerity this abduction issue. We have dealt with this issue with sincerity and will also do that in future. If Japan continues to insist on its position that all those abductees should be returned to Japan, then the abduction issue can be settled only when the dead return to life and all those missing Japanese reappear. We hope that the Japanese side will accept today's reality concerning the abduction issue and deal with it with prudence.

Mr. Salsabili (Islamic Republic of Iran): I apologize for taking the floor again. It is so unfortunate that our very good neighbour country tried to change the nature of a bilateral problem, in two senses: technicality and locality. It is a change in terms of technicality because it is a change from our technical understanding of existing bilateral agreements through the memorandum of understanding of 1971 between the two countries, at the time between Iran and Sharjah, turning it into a multilateral problem by expanding it to the International Court of Justice and to other regional countries that have no direct relationship to the problem at all.

The locality of the problem could be resolved between the two parties on the basis of the memorandum of understanding of the time. My country is totally available and accessible, and is willing to resolve this issue bilaterally.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): My delegation would like to respond to the statement just made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is entirely groundless, and we cannot accept it. The abduction issue has not been solved. The abduction issue still exists. Therefore, we cannot accept the allegation made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The abduction issue is a most serious issue, not only for Japan in that it relates directly to the lives and security of Japanese citizens, but for the entire international community.

The resolution on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea adopted last December by the General Assembly (resolution 61/174), explicitly expressed very serious concern at unresolved questions of international concern relating to the abduction of foreigners in the form of an enforced disappearance, which violates the human rights of the nationals of other sovereign countries.

The Government of Japan has identified 17 Japanese citizens who were victims of abduction by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Of the 17, only 5 have returned to Japan. Of the remaining 12 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea claims that 8 are dead and four never entered the country, and that the abduction issue has therefore been resolved. That is not a satisfactory explanation. It is not true. For the fates of those 12 victims, no satisfactory explanation has ever been provided by the authorities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Under the circumstances Japan has to believe that the 12 victims are still alive.

The fundamental policy of Japan remains unchanged. Based on the Pyongyang Declaration, Japan will continue to make every effort to normalize relations through the settlement of the unfortunate past and through comprehensive resolution of outstanding problems such as those relating to nuclear issues, the abductions and missile issues. Japan would like to

consult with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on concrete steps that might be taken towards normalization based on the outcome of the recent meeting of the working group on the normalization of Japan-Democratic People's Republic of Korea relations.

Numbers of Korean people who were taken to Japan during the Second World War were also mentioned. The numbers cited by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are totally groundless. Such an argument lacks evidence and is not well proven, so we are not able to accept that allegation made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The meeting rose at 9.30 p.m.